

spare Rib

A Women's Liberation Magazine
Issue 70 May 1978
35 pence

**Taking
action (nervously)
- short story by
a suffragette**

**Black nurses in
Britain -
"Answer back
and you're out"**

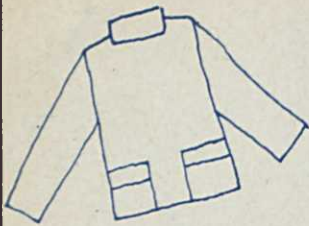
**Mirror, mirror
on the wall -
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WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

an illuminating womanscript

A group of women working with spare Rib contributing images have been meeting to discuss how we use images in the mag. We felt dissatisfied with the way pictures were used so literally - to describe "AN EVENT" ie. always 2ndary to a Text.

People flicking through the mag often got the impression that we spent all our picketing, demonstrating and struggling - oppressed, grey images of Women, alienating the people who weren't taking part in the action. S. Rib isn't promoting forms

of expression other than the Written Word (mainly in columns), and this is reflected in

the contributions we receive at the mag - mainly typescripts or written letters. We are perpetuating the separation between

WORDS and IMAGES

as all other mags do. (Mag, mag, mag!) So we decided to experiment and produce an issue that discussed ideas visually rather than in columns of type with PICS to liven it up.

The shift is about the interaction between

WORDS and IMAGES and We want to

explore those possibilities for expressing our ideas.

We don't want this to be a 1st issue - we want

it to spark off more contributions in an effort

to open out to Women who don't express them-

selves through typed womanscripts.

We divided into small groups and discussed areas

of interest; (watch out for Issue 72!)

LOVE & HUMOUR
Fashion & Appearance
Sensuality & Erotica
LESLEY RUDA
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if you've got any VISUAL IDEAS for S. Rib please contact Laura or Pat at Spare Rib

COVER

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Spare Rib is produced collectively by Anny Brackx, Barbara Charles, Alison Fell, Susan Hemmings, Sue Hobbs, Laura Margolis, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Ruthie Petrie, Linda Phillips, Janie Prince, Amanda Sebestyen, Carole Spedding, Ruth Wallgrove.

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NHS cuts back on smears

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I thought the article 'A Smear in Time' was a very useful and clearly presented account of the benefits of regular cervical smears in the early detection of cancer. It reminded me to ask for one on my last visit to the doctor. Though my doctor, a woman, is very sympathetic, she explained that she was not able to give me a smear test. Evidently one has to be over thirty-five or to have had three pregnancies to be eligible, and being twenty-six with no pregnancies I failed to qualify. To quote the *SR* article, "abnormal cells most commonly begin in women aged 25-29... Have a smear" is sound advice, but it would seem that swingeing cuts in the NHS make it difficult to put this into practice. It is an awful irony that there is now a supposedly greater emphasis on preventive medicine, and just as women are becoming aware of the benefits of early detection, we are denied access to these facilities.

In sisterhood,
S Pennington,
Colchester.

Childbirth and choice

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I wholeheartedly agree with everything that Josette Morgan said in her letter (*SR* 68); and like her I feel very unhappy about the current trend among feminists of regarding 'natural childbirth' and home deliveries as the only way of having babies.

When my daughter was born three years ago I had a pleasant and almost pain-free labour by means of epidural anaesthesia. This was my decision, I was not pressurised in any way, and I was given all the information I needed to make it. Forceps were not necessary and best of all I was totally aware of what was happening the whole time. While accepting that successful natural childbirth must be very fulfilling I am sure that my own experience was preferable to the more usual failed attempt at 'breathing' followed by a drugged stupor induced by gas and air, pethidine etc.

What concerns me most is that the fashion for home births and natural childbirth especially given the present climate of NHS cuts, may be used as an excuse for not extending the availability of epidurals and even for reducing the limited provision there is at the moment.

Surely the way in which she gives birth should be another aspect of 'a woman's right to choose'.
Sue Ryrie,
Liverpool.

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I'd like to reply to Josette Morgan's letter. I felt very sad to read her letter.

People are pressing for natural childbirth and putting forward its possible advantages because it is a choice that is very often no

longer available. It is an issue of women's rights.

Epidurals are a technique that is in the control of the medical profession. Many women want to have control themselves over their bodies and not hand their bodies over to the doctors. That is one of the reasons why women choose to have their babies at home—so that they can maintain control over their situation. To bring epidurals into the home would be bringing the very doctor-controlled situation into the home that women wish to avoid.

Of course, I think most women advocating natural childbirth would not wish to deprive any woman of her choice of modern medicine's alternative. And all maternity units *should* have epidurals and acupuncture available—as well as staff prepared to support women using psychoprophylaxis as a method of pain relief.

Yours sincerely,
Jennifer Spinks
Association of Radical Midwives,
8 Bumgreave Bank,
Sheffield.

Reclaiming the night

* Dear Sisters,

At the Socialist Feminist Conference in Manchester in January, some women claimed that one of the Reclaim the Night marches went "unthinkingly through a black area" and was therefore racist. We've heard the same criticism from other sources, and know it applies to us in Leeds, since we went through the multi-racial area of Chapeltown.

As to racism: any man can be a rapist. The colour of the penis forcing its way into you is irrelevant. "When we are attacked as women, then we must attack a man because he is a *man*, not a black man" (from a letter by Paula McDiarmid to *SR* 67). Very true, and that's what we're doing.

We chose the Chapeltown route because of several brutal murders of women in the area over the last 2 years. This was understood by all the local people we talked to, informed of the march, gave leaflets to... There were a few black women on the march. Had more women from Chapeltown been involved in the initial organisation local support could have been much bigger, but the impetus came from the then Revolutionary Feminist Group most of whom live in a different part of town.

The Reclaim the Night marchers were perfectly well aware of what we were doing in marching through a black area—why should sisters call us "unthinking"? We obviously considered the image that an all-white women's march (which it wasn't) carrying torches *might* present, and took care to make it clear, in advance and on the night, exactly what we were doing. And we feel it was understood.

Feminists who voted with their feet and stayed away never got it together to tell us why. (Incidentally there were women from mixed left groups there—Big Flame, IMG, SWP, CP, Alternative Socialism and

no doubt more—decisions not to come were all individual).

It's a pity that the women who muttered (and mutter) "racism" behind our backs never confronted the Leeds Reclaim the Night group with their criticisms. We weren't, and aren't, invisible or unknown. In sisterhood,
Leeds Reclaim the Night Group,
c/o Corner Bookshop,
162 Woodhouse Lane,
Leeds 2.

Help!

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I am 22 years old, divorced with a 5-year-old daughter. I wish to do SRN training, but no hospital in my area is willing to take me on a part-time basis. I have just been refused Nursery Nurse training on the grounds that I am overqualified.

I have even been refused Auxiliary Nursing because I have had no previous experience; at the Job Centre where I enquired for Auxiliary, it was suggested to me by a male employee that I should stick to shop or office work.

Can anybody help me please.

C Harper,
Edinburgh.

(C Harper—your letter did not include your address. Please send it to us so we can forward any replies.)

Therapy Rules OK

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

The first question I asked myself after reading Sheila Jeffreys' vindication against therapy is "has she been in therapy?" If she hasn't, I suggest she goes and sees what it has to offer before dismissing it as part of the male enemy's weapon against us women!

Sheila objects to the hierarchy of one-to-one counselling. But asymmetry does not mean hierarchy. In fact, the counsellor was the first authority figure to whom I could bring myself, with her help, to say "fuck off". Counselling enabled me to assert myself against other people's domination, and I hardly think that is a ploy to perpetuate women's oppression.

Ms Jeffreys states that consciousness raising *should* give us the satisfaction of directing our anger outwards, and that action with other women *should* be therapeutic. What of the women who cannot meet these 'shoulds'?

Her attitude typifies what I find so oppressive in the women's movement: its moral staunchness in the name of feminism. She makes me fear post-revolutionary oppression (especially if even consciousness raising groups evolve their own hierarchy and games).

Love, in sisterhood,
Andrea Duffy,
London.

Children's oppression

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

In the article by Marsha Rowe about 'how children fare' (*SR* 68)

it seems neither she nor any of the adults she interviewed ever thought to ask the children themselves what they feel about the way they are being 'brought up'.

This is just one example of how 'natural' it seems for children to be oppressed, and how unconsciously we, as adults, perpetuate their oppression.

Adults tend to see children as a mixture of amusement and a series of problems. While we make endless liberal statements about how children are right to rebel against the things we impose on them, we never think to explain to them the whole situation and ask what their solution would be. The children have no say. The only tactics of protest open to them are guerrilla tactics. Their pleas for communication go in vain: "I like carrots at daddy's house but not at mummy's." Instead of asking the child why, the adult directs the child into a fantasy world: "Let's pretend you're at daddy's." Eventually the child comes to internalise her oppression. One child whose mother had taken him from the commune is quoted as saying "I was a silly sod. I should have stayed in the commune and visited my mum." He blames himself for having left—just as so many women have blamed themselves for the oppression they have suffered.

Children are intelligent human beings who as yet have only a limited knowledge of the world around them. Yet we treat them as though they were subnormal, and sooner or later they are sufficiently battered down to accept the role of 'adult', and are released into the world as alienated human beings. Feminists, revolutionaries, perhaps; but nevertheless alienated.

All adults oppress all children. We are all guilty, and this letter is in no way a specific attack on the adults in the commune who are trying as best they know how to have good relationships with the children they live with. But the children remain oppressed. If we want to stop oppressing them we must start by listening to what they have to say to us about their lives.

In sisterhood,
Helen Boizard,
Carol Ackroyd.

The mote in our eye

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

To take up the themes expressed in Lynn Alderson's letter (*SR* 69) concerning the apparent need of some feminists to join a highly structured socialist organisation; while I basically agree with Lynn that this is a lamentable phenomenon, especially in the degree that it is implied that these socialist organisations can be an alternative, or complementary to, being within the revolutionary movement that is Women's Liberation, I think we can not afford to ignore the mote in our own eye. That is, the existence of unquestioned strands of authoritarianism and determinist ideology within this movement. It

seems fairly obvious that the hierarchical, male-dominated organisations of the Left are inevitably opposed to the expression of our most basic demand for autonomy over our own lives.

Nonetheless, I do not feel that we can afford to ignore the hegemony of class, sexuality and lifestyle within women's liberation. I feel that we may have forgotten that it is not enough to have strong personal ties with women who are completely similar to ourselves in race, class, sexuality and age and call this political. It seems important to recognise, identify, and act upon the anger and the refusal of male control and male definitions of all women in this society, and not just the chosen few. This would be instead of convincing ourselves that personal solutions are possible, and allowing ourselves to be manipulated and contained in a self-deprecating and approval-seeking manner. It then remains to ask whether such activity as this would also lead to the creation of a 'feminist party line' and if so, how we should organise to prevent this? And how may we disencumber ourselves of our present 'line' which sometimes appears to me to be 'Ostrich with head in sand'? In sisterhood,
Zaidie Parr.

Porn as consciousness raiser?

Dear *Spare Rib*,
The depiction of pornography in SR 65 has provoked criticism. What was it about these pictures that caused this reaction? Was it that they were "sensational" or gave "free publicity" to purveyors? Or was it that some of us don't like being faced with how men see women?

Pornography reveals the reality of the sex war—how much men hate and fear women. If we refuse to confront it we can hide behind the cosy liberal myth that men (eg the TUC and the Prime Minister) are our brothers hence on our side. This suggests that not only do men not enjoy porn but they do not benefit from it. It is in the interest of all women contributing to the destruction of all violence against women through enforcing the violence against ourselves. Pornography is a business raiser for women looking about for women's liberation. Feminist Pornography.

Campaign for separate carriages

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Undoubtedly you must have heard about the 15 year old girl who was brutally attacked while travelling on the train from Reading to Waterloo.

Surely this calls for a campaign to press for separate carriages for women in British

Rail trains. Would *Spare Rib* be interested in urging people to write to British Rail demanding that at least some carriages be made available for women on all trains.

Yours in sisterhood,
Jude Howell.

Swings and Roundabouts

* Dear *Spare Rib* women,
It was good to hear from you—your magazine is one of the ones we fight for at the office. Hope that some day we can meet with some of you.

Our next issue is still a few months away. We are a very irregular quarterly—we average about two issues a year, and would love to know how you manage to come out so often, so well—but imagine you don't have a lot of time for letter writing so will wait until we somehow connect to ask these questions.

Best wishes,
Jane Tuchsherer
The Second Wave,
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Although women bleed, does it necessarily mean we must be red? Some of us have blue blood. Can't you cater for us too?
Sallie Eden

Income for mothers?

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was saddened by the tone of apology in which Lois Gully felt it necessary to explain to a feminist audience her reasons for choosing to stay at home with her baby.

I have certainly heard it argued by feminists opposed to wages for motherhood that the woman who looks after her children at home should not be paid because she is not making a sufficient contribution to society... but that is surely not the majority view in the movement? Surely most of us would agree that, regardless of conditioning and the child-care facilities available, there will always be some women (and men) who will choose to care for their own children full-time, if only for a few years? Surely we accept the validity of such a choice? And if we do, how can we deny the justice of the claim that people who make that choice should have money of their own?

There is another point too. The women's movement rightly campaigns for better allowances for single mothers. Opponents argue that single mothers shouldn't be better off than wives because that would put a premium on immorality. Without accepting the second part of that argument, we would surely agree that if a single woman received £x a week because she is at home looking after her children, a married woman should do no worse? Or do we think, with the DHSS, that such a woman doesn't need money of her own because she has a husband?

Of course there are dangers in paying women at home. But is it not rather maternalistic of us who do get paid for the work we do—

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thus 'institutionalising' whatever forms of oppression we suffer at work—to decree that housewives are less able to understand and resist these dangers than we are?

I'm not arguing for 'Wages for Housework' in the sense formulated by the group of the same name, since they apparently make no distinction between people whose only 'housework' is self-maintenance and those who care for a number of genuine dependents (ie the very young or the infirm). What I am saying is that people whose chosen work is caring for people who need care, should for that reason have an income in their own right from the state.

In sisterhood,
Zoe Fairbairns,
London.

Counteract replies

Dear *Spare Rib*,
We are writing in reply to the allegations made against Counteract in a statement by Scarlet Woman Theatre Group in SR 69. The statement says we are an SWP dominated group which belittles feminist issues. This is untrue. 1 Counteract is a democratically-run collective of 9 people, which is not aligned to any political party. The SWP members in the group are a minority of 3 and have never dominated the collective politically.

2 We produced an anti-rape play ('She Asked For It') precisely because we are committed to feminist issues and the response to it has been very encouraging.

3 No-one was 'ordered' to leave the women's symbol off publicity. Everyone in the collective agreed that it was important to play to the 'unconverted' as well as to the 'converted', and it was agreed that the symbol might discourage some people from booking the play.

4 At no time did anyone discredit the rape group politically or

artistically. They were having difficulty producing a play and some members of the collective criticised their working techniques. However, help and support were offered and deadlines were extended.

All the women in Counteract are Socialist Feminists. The women who left (now 'Scarlet Woman Theatre Group') chose to see themselves as an isolated wing. They held a Socialist Feminist meeting to which four women, two of whom are uninvited, were not invited. Their political differences were not articulated until after they had left Counteract, and their decision to leave was made without consulting the collective.

The remainder of Counteract decided it was important to fulfil commitments and produce a play from scratch. The publicity had already gone out so the title and leaflets could not be changed. Regarding contacts, our policy towards Scarlet Woman Theatre Group is the same as to any other fringe group. Provided we see the work we give information willingly.

The Scarlet Woman Theatre Group tried to discredit our play without having seen it. Their statement is counter-productive, inaccurate and divisive. Putting more effort into dissuading people from booking our play than into discussing the issue of rape is damaging to the entire women's movement.

In producing a play about rape we are trying to work towards unity—unity which is based on the importance of the subject to all women. Many of the feminists to whom we have performed have used the play as a means of getting women together to organise around the issue of rape. Surely the more plays, discussions and meetings there are on the subject, the better.

In sisterhood,
Debbie, Kate, Carrie, Jean, Philippa (Counteract).

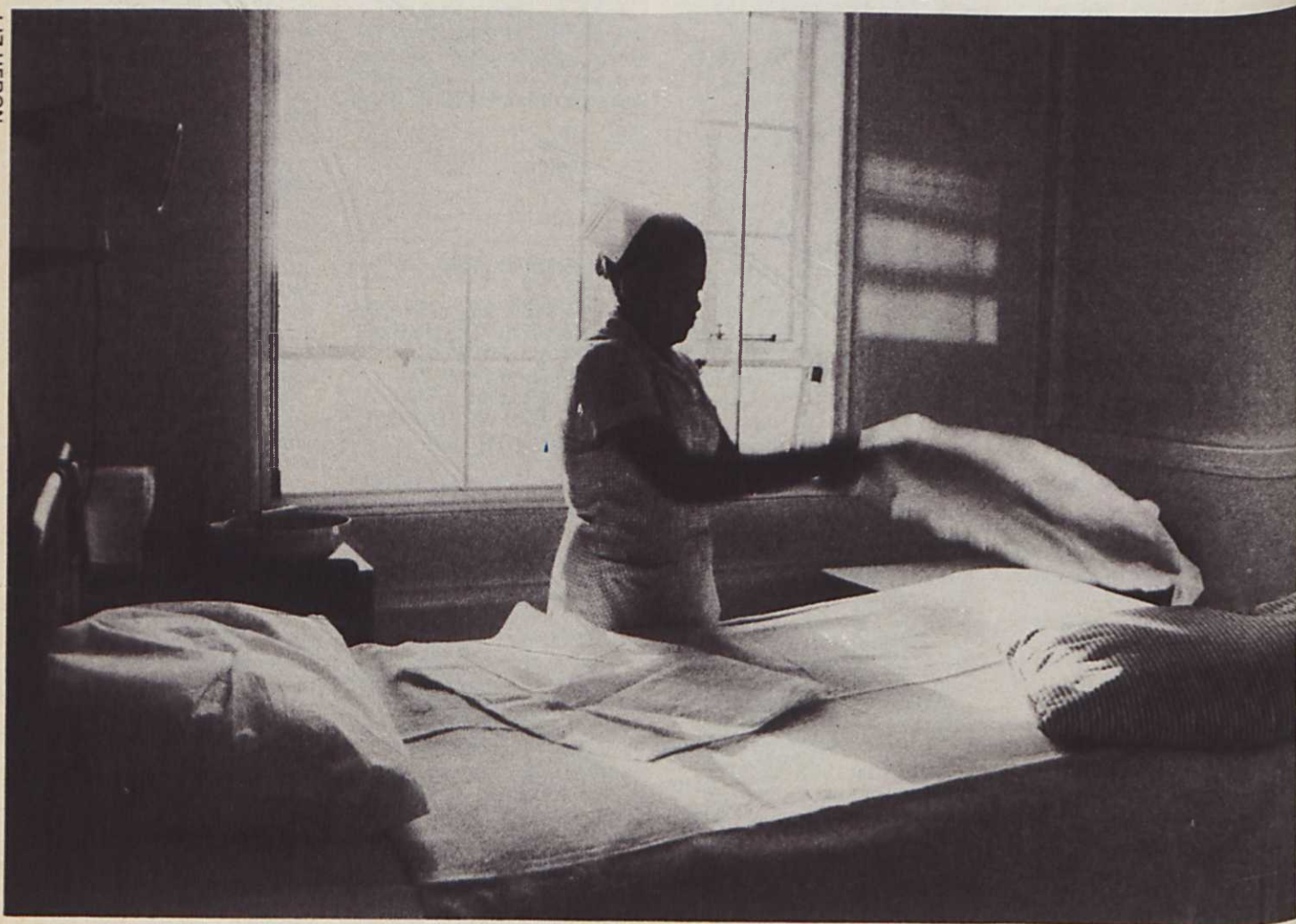
Nursing and Racism

"It is true that nurses are bitchy about each other, that we gossip, spy on each other and carry stories to ward sisters. But it is not because we are women that we are bitchy, not because we are women that we gossip. It is because we are servants. We might like to say nursing is a profession but most of us know that nurses, even senior nurses, are just servants as far as doctors are concerned."

Mary, who said that, works in a well-known London hospital. Like many other overseas student and pupil nurses whose experiences and opinions this article is based on she didn't want her real name revealed—overseas nursing students can't afford to complain or even comment about their situation.

***Amrit Wilson exposes
what black nurses have to put up with***

LIZ HERON



Nursing, with its ethics of self-abnegation, its stereotype of women who are happy to help others, has another angle to it, and another stereotype—one which is internalised and fits in well with the rigid nursing hierarchy—a stereotype of 'correctness', obedience to superiors and of 'decency' so acute that if someone, particularly a 'foreigner', was ill-paid or insultingly treated it is understood that this would never ever be mentioned by them or anyone else. In this atmosphere, being oppressed as a group seems to have distorted women's personalities to such an extent that stabbing one's colleagues in the back in order to move one step up the hierarchy is not uncommon, the ultimate reward being the possibility to tyrannise one's juniors.

Entering this atmosphere for your first job can be hard enough if you are British and white, but if you are black or have come from another country it is far worse. When overseas nursing students first arrive in Britain there are in general no arrangements to meet them, no information is given to them on how they should find their way from the airport, or settle down to their new life in Britain. * Usually they are told nothing either about the welfare facilities they might claim or about the attitudes they might face in British hospitals—attitudes, for example, to birth and dying which are taken for granted here but may be very different in the countries they have come from.

They are thrown straight into the lowest part of the nursing hierarchy—a structure which "cuts down your dignity to nothing and treats you as though you were at kindergarten" and warns you that "answering back won't do". Authoritarianism and class attitudes are sharpened by racial prejudice. The overseas student nurses (those training for SRN) and pupil nurses (those training for SEN) are given no help in adjusting to life in Britain, but their lives on and off duty are laid open to the racist curiosity and contempt of senior staff. Black nurses who had had children and had not married told me of remarks such as "You should have left behind your tribal behaviour when you came to Britain." A nurse from Guyana who married an English doctor told me how the ward sister had taken the piece of news. "She looked quite disturbed; she said 'Really! Don't you think you are marrying a bit above your station, do you think you'll be happy?'" Others told of questions about the men they lived with such as "Are you sure he'll be able to support you if you get pregnant?" A nurse from Barbados (*Race Today* 1974) recalled how when as a student she had been living in the Nurses' Home and had worn clothes which she had brought with her from Barbados "Matron said to me 'Where are you going dressed like a tart?' They used to do things like going through your

clothes and then ask how you could afford certain things."

Of course these attitudes are faced by black nurses from Britain as well as from overseas, but there is a difference: black women settled in Britain are no longer prepared to tolerate such paternalism; for overseas student and pupil nurses there is no way out. They are not in a position to fight back. Although in some hospitals they constitute the bulk of the workforce, they have no power as workers and more than anything else they are conscious of the insecurity of their position in Britain. In the end many feel like the Nigerian student nurse who commented bitterly "In our hospital you don't notice racism. You begin to accept it because you begin to think that black student nurses who are insulted and ill-treated are just stupid. You only notice racial prejudice when white students are there, when there is a departure from the normal. If a white student is five minutes late they don't get told off. They call it 'personality'." 'Personality' of course is very important in nursing. As a ward sister told me "The sort of personality I like to see is polite, well-spoken and obedient, and girls from your part of the world so often are, dear." The fact is that student nurses from 'my part of the world' have to be, otherwise they'd lose their jobs.

Overseas nursing students are in fact among the worst off and most vulnerable of British workers, more insecure even than many catering workers who enter Britain on work permits. Classed as students, they are subject to close supervision all the time. If they cannot show 'good results' their visas may not be extended and so if they offend a superior they may well face deportation. Also while a work permit holder can settle in Britain after four years of being here on a work permit, a student nurse's years of work on the ward floor count for nothing if she wants to settle here, even though like other migrant workers and unlike students, overseas nursing students come here with a simple economic purpose. As a nurse from the Philippines explained "When patients say 'get your black hands off me', or when I am tired and exhausted and my white colleagues say 'can't you work any faster, why are you so slow and stupid', I put up with it because back home I have five kids and they need the money. I can't afford dignity. It is so easy to lose your job."

"In the hospital overseas student and pupil nurses have two bosses, the Director of Nursing Education who is in charge of all students and the Divisional nursing officer who is in charge of the wards, because in the wards you are a worker. The two have close links. If you have offended a ward sister by some utterly trivial piece of 'answering back', it will reach the ears of the Nursing Officer and



LIZ HERON

through her the Director of Nursing Education. It can mean that you are labelled as a trouble maker and when you finish your training you won't get a job." Of course the same applies if you are British or from overseas but given the racist atmosphere you work in, if you are black you are more likely to get a bad report.

The following are two cases of black nurses settled in Britain who experienced the wrath of the hospital hierarchy. Many overseas nursing students in similar positions have had to leave the country.

Mary, a nurse originally from Guyana: "I worked very very hard at XXXX hospital. One day about seven months after I had been working there, I was in charge of a postnatal ward. A patient complained that her leg was hurting. I told her that I would draw the screen and bandage up her leg. I went off to get the bandage when matron said she wanted to do the ward round with me, I told her that I was about to bandage up a patient's leg. She opened the curtain and the patient had her right foot on the bedside table, the table she usually had her dinner on. It was nearly dinner time. Matron just wiped the floor with me, said how incompetent I was, what a terrible nurse I was. Seven months of work just went down the drain just like that. In front of the patient she said 'Don't you ever ask me for a reference. I shall never give you one.' Later on that day she repeated this." As a result, for years Mary was unable to find a job which required references. She became an agency nurse.



The second case is that of Noble Din, a Pakistani male nurse. Din qualified as a State Enrolled Nurse in 1971 and was taken on as a student nurse to do an SRN course by St Margaret's Hospital in Epping in January 1975. In July last year he applied for a job as SEN in the same hospital. He was told by the Senior Nursing Office in charge of recruitment that a vacancy did not exist. In fact the hospital told him that "there was no vacancy for him" because of his problem with "verbal communication" (he speaks excellent English and has in fact worked as a police interpreter), his mediocre record (he had one bad ward report out of nine), and because he had been off sick (this in spite of the fact that he had produced doctor's certificates). Din took the case to court under the Race Relations Act. The first hearing on 8 March this year established that Din had been wrongly informed that there was no vacancy for the job he was seeking. The case has been adjourned until 14 April when the question of racial discrimination will be considered. Din's opinion is that he was being victimised because he is black and because although he has always been polite he has refused to accept the everyday racism which is handed out as a matter of course to black nurses.

Many nurses who are unable to get jobs in hospitals end up as agency nurses (temping). For women, agency nursing with its flexible hours ties in with their roles as wife and mother. The ones I spoke to though, would have still preferred to be directly employed by a hospital. But it was a question of agency nursing or

being unemployed. However in the case of overseas nursing students this alternative obviously does not exist, because 'when you are out of a job you are out of the country'. For the same reason they would not be able to take their hospital or Local Health Authority to court over their racist behaviour. As one Mauritian nurse put it "You get the feeling that there is no point in complaining, who can you complain to? All the systems are run by racists and all the set-ups have one purpose—to keep you in your place."

If an overseas student does in fact manage to get through her training without ever giving offence to anyone, she may still find herself facing deportation when she passes her exams. Under the 1971 Immigration Act no reason need be given by the Home Office; she is merely told that she has passed her exam, stopped being a student and must now leave the country, like any other university or college student. In fact they are defined as students for a specific purpose: to provide the Health Service with a large low paid and easily exploitable work force. The total numbers of student and pupil

nurses as compared to the total number of nurses show the scale of this exploitation (SRNs 99,606, Student nurses 54,670; SENs 52,494, pupil nurses 21,594). What it amounts to is not only a policy of oppression for these nurses as individuals but for the third world countries they come from. In fact the plight of overseas nurses here shows clearly how Britain continues to exploit these countries by using them as a pool of cheap labour which can be drawn upon when required and got rid of when the market no longer needs it.

In the past, faced with ill-paid jobs and not enough British workers willing to take them, British hospitals started looking to the ex-colonies and other third world countries for workers. Direct recruitment got under way through advertisements and recruitment agencies: of the 20,000 or so overseas student nurses now in British hospitals more than half were directly recruited. The applicants were promised great careers in British hospitals when they finished their courses. Certain hospitals (not surprisingly these included many mental and geriatric hospitals) recruited mainly from overseas. Over the last eighteen months increasing numbers of nurses who have passed their exam are being refused jobs and forced to return.

Here the hypocrisy of defining them as students comes out even more—for their training is often no use to them outside Britain and returning to their home countries often means the end of their careers as nurses. Back home the conditions often just do not exist for them to go on as nurses. In Guyana, for example, there are no mental hospitals, in Mauritius the hospital structure is self-sufficient, ensuring that vacancies will never be available. In various countries from which nurses are recruited (for example the Philippines and Singapore) the SEN qualification is not recognised, a fact the British authorities are well aware of. For the men and women returning to their countries after two years' hard work, and to their families who were looking forward to the result of this hard work in the form of increased financial support, it is a bitter economic set-back.

But the dumping is still being done rather discreetly. Often the decision as to whether overseas students should be offered jobs in the hospitals they are training in is left to the Local Area Health

SALARY SCALES FOR 1977 (they may be revised in 1978)

State Registered Nurse (SRN)—Three Year Course

Student Nurses' Training Allowances

		Lodging Charge for Residents
First year of training	£1560 + £312 + 5%	£222
Second year of training	£1641 + £312 + 5%	£222
Third year of training	£1740 + £312 + 5%	£222

Qualified Nurses' Salary Scales

Staff nurse	£2121 to £2646 + £312 + 5%	£321
Ward sister	£2706 to £3552 + £312 + 5%	£384
Divisional nursing officer	to £4416 + £312 + 5%	

State Enrolled Nurse (SEN)—Two Year Course

Pupil Nurses' Training Allowances

First year of training	£1560 + £312 + 5%	£222
Second year of training	£1641 + £312 + 5%	£222

Qualified Nurses' Salary Scales

Enrolled nurse	£1872 to £2340	£288
Senior Enrolled Nurse	£2121 to £2646	£321



Authority, sometimes even to the District Management Team. But the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) is always there to guide these decisions with its directives. In Hounslow, according to Christine Potter, secretary of the NALGO sub-branch, "In April last year the District Nursing Officer for that area wrote to the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee saying that in the future they would register all posts with the Department of Education and Science instead of offering them to students. The Shop Stewards protested, but

in many hospitals in this area it is still happening. My feeling is that it is the cuts, what they are trying to do is not fill vacancies. The District Management Team said that their action was not based on a change in policy; it was just that the DHSS had drawn it to their attention that there were now a number of unemployed nurses in the resident labour force."

Implicit in this argument is that overseas nursing students, although living and working in Britain, are not even to be considered a part of the resident labour force. Because they come from the poor

countries of the world, because they are black, when it comes to their rights they can be simply ignored. Every stage in their lives, in their histories shows the effect on the one hand of sexual oppression and on the other of the continuing exploitation of British imperialism. And yet women's groups have so far shown little interest in their plight, something which perhaps tells us a little about the position of white feminists in Britain. ●

** CHANNEL (Centre of Help and Advice for Newcomers to Nursing Education). This has been operating within the Royal College of Nursing since February 1976. Though it cannot possibly reach all nursing students, it does provide help and advice about immigration, welfare facilities etc. It is sponsored and financed by the Gatsby Trust as a three year project. At present CHANNEL is working on a survey of overseas nursing students' problems, to find out how the service could be developed in the future.*





On March 21, parents of children at the South Oxford Nursery occupied the building two days before the council planned to close it down. The Oxford City Nursery Campaign reports:

Last July a Council Working Party secretly decided to close South Oxford Nursery. The County Council Education Committee consisting of country squires, antique dealers and led by Brigadier Streatfield, were delighted to save a measly £8,000 a year. "No baby-minding on the rates!" said the Brigadier. Since then, the class has had its waiting list closed and so

last term only 13 children remained. This is the only city centre nursery provision and the children came from all over Oxford—many from Asian, Egyptian, Spanish, Italian and Chilean families, where English is not the first language and some from one parent families where the mother is out at work.

We were all aware that here was a good state nursery class with potentially 30 full-time places, being closed for no reason. It was no substitute to be offered part-time places in other nurseries. At a meeting called by the Nursery Campaign, it was decided that the only thing to do was for the parents to occupy the building when they

went to collect their children. The parents were acutely aware of their small numbers, language problems and lack of confidence to take such a radical action; nevertheless they went ahead and occupied the nursery. The occupation has since been successfully maintained with the support of the Nursery Campaign and other groups. The children have been involved throughout the occupation.

Our campaign is not only concerned with the loss or reduction of nursery education for the children now at the school, but is fighting to save 30 full-time places for the city and to expand nursery provision. We are now running a happy and efficient nursery with trained staff. The trades council have given their support and public sector workers have refused to cut off our essential services. Representatives from the Hounslow Hospital Occupation came down in support and voted us £10 from their limited funds. Also the local press, TV and radio gave us very sympathetic coverage in the first few days. However, we are aware that unless public opinion both locally and nationally

stays with us, the council will get a possession order from the courts. When they think we are an abandoned cause, no longer newsworthy, they will try to send in the bailiffs. It would be a bitter loss if all the energy, coordination and caring created through the occupation were to be wasted. Many of us have realised for the first time what can be achieved by taking action and fighting together for our rights. This action is of national importance as it is the first occupation of a nursery since the passing of the Criminal Trespass Law. It is vital for us to win this fight against particularly vicious education cuts. □

Send letters of support, ideas, contacts to: Anne-Marie or Danna, 40 Bartlemas Road, Oxford. Donations to: Michelle Flood, Treasurer, Oxford City Nursery Campaign, 35 Alexandra Road, Botley, Oxford.

BUT . . .

One day, as the children played, they heard a terrible noise . . . CLUMP CLUMP CLUMP.

And Brigadier Streatfield, the terrible giant, came stamping into their playground.



OVUTIMING

A 'Fertility Detection System' that pinpoints the exact day of ovulation has been introduced into Britain by Ovutime Inc. Developed to aid conception in women with problems of infertility, it has great potential (they suggest) as a safe and reliable means of contraception.

It is not based on a new idea—people have known about changes in cervical mucus through the menstrual cycle for 50 years, and some women already use their mucus as an indication of when it is safe to have intercourse. Immediately before ovulation—when you are most likely to conceive—the viscosity, or tackiness, of the mucus decreases so that sperm can get through the cervix.

What the 'Ovutimer' does is give an accurate record of the changes; it gauges the viscosity by measuring the force needed to separate two glass slides stuck together with mucous taken from the cervix.

The only version now available costs £1400, but they are hoping to produce a home model for around £7 within a year. They have not done field tests on its use as a contraceptive; the question remains of whether not having intercourse in the few days before ovulation is enough to prevent pregnancy, even when you know exactly when ovulation occurs. But it looks optimistic—the method would certainly have no side effects. And it will help women to get pregnant easily when they want to. It seems that it will put understanding and control of our fertility into our hands cheaply and simply. □

LAW LORDS DECIDE

On March 31 the Law Lords voted unanimously that the personal rights of the unmarried battered woman should override the property rights of her common law husband (see SR 68). This means that the husband can be excluded from a shared home to give the woman temporary protection and breathing space in which to find alternative accommodation.

When Ms Davis heard of her victory over her husband's appeal, she said, "I am hoping that Hackney Council will give me a transfer so that I can live in safety. I needed to establish the legal ten-

ancy of that flat before the council would give me another."

Although this is good news for battered women, the length of time the man's property rights can be suspended is left to the discretion of County Judges. Lord Salmon said that it might be necessary for Parliament to consider an amendment as he didn't think it would be fair to keep a man out of his home for more than three months. Given how difficult it is to find accommodation, it seems that ultimately property rights do come before the safety of women. □

NEWS COPYDATES

SR 71—April 27

SR 72—May 25

It's worth trying after these dates. PLEASE KEEP SENDING US YOUR NEWS.

ZAPPING TOP SHOP

"Where girls look like girls and men just look." (Ad for Top Shops on Capital Radio and Thames TV.) When women objected, the ad was run with this comment: "We have received complaints from some women that our ads are making women seem like sex objects. We completely agree!"

Well, if they don't get the point when it's put nicely . . . 20 feminists went into a London Top Shop on March 29 armed with stickers: "Just look? Rubbish. They leer. They grab. They rape"; "Try running from the fellas, who don't just look, in crippling Top Shop gear". They tried on flimsy dresses, asking if they looked properly girlish—obviously the publicity men weren't convinced, because they accused them all of being dykes! The store manager assured everyone that the ad would stop, but said that *next* time they should complain to the company management . . . !□

* Plymouth Women's Liberation groups held a 'Reclaim the Night' march on March 11, going through the city centre and Union Street—notorious for its sailors, marines and violence. Men were abusive but the marchers chanted all the louder and drowned them out, and had encouraging shouts from some women. They also met all the crowds coming out of cinemas—all in all they felt they'd made an impression on the night, as well as getting coverage in the local daily paper . . .

* Groups of women also 'reclaimed the night' in Finsbury Park, North London, and in Canterbury, where they leafleted pubs and plastered the council offices with leaflets; angry at plans to cut back on street lighting . . .

FREE NOREEN WINCHESTER

Noreen Winchester, jailed for seven years for killing her father after being raped and degraded by him since the age of 11, has been refused leave to appeal.

Noreen, now 21, is in Armagh Jail, Northern Ireland, convicted of manslaughter. Her father had systematically raped her, and once his wife left home, forced her to keep house for him and her brothers and sisters, virtually imprisoning her and allowing her out only on Saturdays to do the family shopping. At last Noreen retaliated by stabbing him 21 times with a breadknife while he was asleep.

At the appeal, her lawyer argued that though the killing was premeditated, the sentence was unjustified as it was really "death by provocation, not by immediate provocation but by a slow-burn provocation of the most terrible kind".

The Lord Chief Justice did recommend that Noreen apply for the royal prerogative of pardon, and her solicitor has already handed in a petition to Roy Mason. Women's groups are campaigning for her release—you can help by sending a postcard to Roy Mason, Stormont Castle, N Ireland calling for her release and by sending contributions to the NW Fund, Bank of Ireland, Stranmillis Rd, Belfast 9. Contact the campaign c/o 13 Sandymount St, Belfast 9. □

STRIP SHOWS STINK!

Edinburgh University Union has recently moved out of the National Union of Students and the NUS policy of non-sexism in student unions has not been adopted by the University. The University Women's Group decided to make a stand over the reappearance of strip shows in the Union.

Around 60 women and 20 men from feminist and left groups in Edinburgh effectively disrupted the latest attempt on March 16 and stopped the stripper appearing.

We occupied the stage and the roof of the bar, and barricaded off the bar. With linked arms we shouted, swore, sang, blew whistles and threw stink bombs. The men responded violently, throwing beer and glasses at us. After an hour or so we heard that the show had been moved upstairs. Only two women managed to get onto the stage before it was surrounded by angry men. The rest of us had to fight our way through the men to join them.

The situation looked as if it was going to erupt into real violence as the men realised how determined we were. Then a couple of women were allowed to talk to the stripper, re-

assuring her that the protest was not against her personally but against Union sexism. She said that she "wouldn't perform in front of those animals" anyway, and left soon afterwards.

The women involved felt an amazing strength and solidarity during and after the disruption. □
Edinburgh University and
Edinburgh WL groups

a man with strong feelings of inferiority and persecution, especially in terms of rejection by women; a man with a low resistance to sexual stimuli. So women, he says, should treat the rapist with respect, show approval of him and what he is doing. He advises women to "use sex to prevent a potential rape situation developing".

He tells the audience that "women tease when they want to and tease when they don't want to", and so we should "set our 'dates' limits of how far we are prepared to go". Yet again, women are told that it is up to us to prevent a situation getting out of control; that we are responsible for provoking a sexual attack.

Storaskas' method for preventing rape is one of passivity. He believes that any woman in a rape situation should not try to resist, but rather gain the trust and confidence of her assailant by going along with his wishes until she can safely escape. If the opportunity to escape does not arise, "Well, so what. After all it is only sexual intercourse when you don't want it."

Apart from perpetuating sexist attitudes about rape, Storaskas' method does not recognise that as every rape situation is different, there can be no *right* way to cope. Nor does it take account of the very real terror that a woman experiences in such a situation; terror that can make her unable to scream or struggle, let alone remain clear-headed enough to "use her imagination" to prevent rape.

Storaska treats rape very lightly.

Throughout his style is slick and offensive. He makes jokes at the expense of all women, and raped women in particular. When demonstrating some basic self-defence techniques he asks for four 'rapees' (volunteers) and leeringly tells the audience, "This won't take long, I know exactly what I'm doing." His final comment is "If you want to get raped and you haven't much time, I suggest that you hitch home tonight."

At a time when the feminist movement is taking up the issue of rape and challenging anti-woman attitudes about why rape happens, who rapes and who gets raped, it is particularly disturbing that this insidious film is being shown. □

Claire Fazan

* The Labour Party does not allow men to go to its National Women's Conference as delegates, only as visitors. So when Mr Hill of Brighton applied to be a delegate he was duly banned. Undaunted, he intends to go as an observer and get his 'fellow' delegate, a woman, to move that he should be admitted. Mr Hills says, "In politics and social affairs I don't think there are issues which are solely women's issues . . . We don't live in a segregated society." Neither, Mr Hill, do we live in a utopian non-sexist society—that's why women need to organise separately . . .

Unsigned news shorts by Barbara Charles, Jill Nicholls, Angela Phillips, Ruth Wallsgrove



AUSTRALIA: WOMEN'S DAY ARRESTS

In Brisbane, Queensland, this International Women's Day over 400 women challenged the state government's * ban on marches by voting to march and put forward the demands of the movement, centering on rape, abortion, lesbian rights, the right to work and specifically the right to organise.

Their action involved a confrontation with the 700 uniformed and 100 plain-clothes special branch policemen called out on such occasions. Arms linked and in tight formation, the women were able to march about 200 yards before they were stopped—fighting broke out and 51 people (46 women and five men from a left support contingent at the back) were arrested and charged with taking part in an illegal procession, disobeying a lawful direction, assault, resisting arrest and inciting others to resist. Bailed out at 50-150 dollars (£30-90) a head, they intend fighting the charges.

Well over 1,000 people have been arrested in Queensland since the ban started in September 1977. Unlike the current ban in London, limited in theory to two months, the Queensland premier Bjelke-Peterson has decreed a ban indefinitely and applies it only to left marches. "The day of the political street march is over. Anybody who holds a street march,

spontaneous or otherwise, will know they are acting illegally. Don't bother to apply for a permit. You won't get one. That's government policy now." (Bjelke-Peterson, *Courier Mail*, 5/9/77).

State powers are sharply increasing under the ruling National-Liberal coalition of the National

vented by police from holding a public rally to discuss impending (and quite reactionary) rape legislation. In May 1976 an anti-rape demonstration was broken up by police. Then in June 1976 the state cabinet decided to cut all funding to women's health centres, refuges



Party, which directly supports the interests of mining capital (notably the uranium lobby). It has given the police wider powers and made direct attacks on the right to organise round trade union issues. Unions have been threatened with deregistration and in the next sitting of parliament, B-P's 'Right to Work' legislation is to be introduced. More accurately termed 'Right to Scab', this is aimed at outlawing the closed shop.

Women in Queensland have suffered specifically from the B-P government. Several weeks before the official ban, women were pre-

and rape crisis centres, even though the money was available from federal government.

The Women's Liberation Movement in Brisbane has been active in building a mass campaign against the ban and the state government itself, forming alliances with trade unions, the black movement, civil liberties supporters and the Movement Against Uranium Mining. After a period of demoralisation, Queensland women are feeling new strength and solidarity.

Ros Innes

* Australia has a federal system of government, where the states have considerable power.

ABORTION AT ISSUE IN GARS CADDEN

Garscadden, a part of Glasgow with a large Catholic population and a Labour stronghold, now has abortion as a major issue in its forthcoming by-election.

This follows an announcement by the Scottish Lay Apostolate Council, a leading Catholic lay organisation, that all its faithful followers should vote against any pro-abortion candidate, a move made to draw attention to their alarm at last year's Labour Party conference decision which overwhelmingly supported free abortion on request.

Of the six candidates only two stand for abortion on demand, Sammy Barr (Communist) and Peter Porteous (Socialist Workers Party). The Scottish National Party candidate Keith Bovey, who used to be pro-abortion, claims that he changed his mind six months ago after attending a meeting of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child. He is now totally against abortion and in favour of giving the "unborn child" legal status. Conservative Ian Lawson has always been anti-abortion: "unless the mother's life is in danger, which I understand is very rare".

Labour's Donald Dewar voted for the 1967 Abortion Act while MP for Aberdeen and still supports the Act, but would like to see law reforms "to tighten abuses". The only female candidate, Shiona Farrell (Scottish Labour Party), is not only opposed to abortion, she also considers it tragic that abortion on demand has become identified with the fight for women's rights, although she claims to agree with sexual equality.

SPUC have joined in the campaign by organising two public meetings and distributing leaflets through every door: posters with pictures of a 20 week old foetus and stories of screaming embryos and anonymous women who have no trouble getting NHS abortions because "it was not convenient for them to have a baby".

However the National Abortion Campaign have also been leafleting, held a public meeting and generally increased their activities in the Garscadden area.

So why the fuss?

Garscadden's by-election is important, the results will help shape future party policies in Scotland. Rumours are afoot that if Labour loses this by-election a party re-think on the subject of abortion is inevitable. □

Sandi Ritchie-Urquhart

Meanwhile...

International Women's Day is one of the four great festivals in the Soviet calendar, every man has to either phone or call on all the women in his life to congratulate them and give them flowers. Unfortunately, this beautiful tradition falls at the time of year when flowers are scarce and expensive.

From the weekend on all flower shops here have had queues trailing from their doors, some waiting for as long as three or four hours. They are good-natured queues, often even jovial, with men regarding the long, cold wait as a sign of their machismo.

Morning Star, 8/3/78

We regret that our comments about Mrs Nuala Scarisbrick in SR 69 were based on incorrect information. Her opposition to a playschool was based primarily on the danger to children on a busy main road. Mrs Scarisbrick was not involved in a 'campaign', but merely wrote a letter to the local authority planning committee. We apologise for misrepresenting her.



* "Les allumeuses de reverberes"—the lantern lighters—put a bomb outside the editorial offices of 'F' magazine in Paris on International Women's Day. The "lantern lighters" think this new women's magazine—launched a few months ago by a publishing empire—is ripping off the feminist movement.

CLINIC BOMBED

An abortion clinic in Cleveland, USA, was firebombed by anti-abortionists on February 18 while a woman was inside having an abortion. Luckily no-one was seriously hurt. The 'Right to Life Society' of Greater Cleveland claimed that the bomber must have been a man who was angry because his daughter or wife had chosen not to have a child without asking him.

This isn't the first time health clinics providing abortions have been bombed or burnt in the States—six have been attacked in the last year, and others systematically harassed by anti-abortionist pickets, occupations and even threats on the lives of workers' children. In October picketers of a clinic in North Carolina were acquitted of trespass because the judges believed they had "a good-faith belief that their actions were necessary to save lives". But how long will it be before the anti-abortionists manage to burn someone alive in the name of the 'Right to Live'? □

Women's TUC to call demo?

When is a demonstration not a demonstration? That seemed to be the question that the TUC Women's Advisory were playing with when they spoke in favour of a resolution on abortion at the TUC Women's conference in Scarborough last month. The resolution called for support to those campaigns which are working to improve existing NHS facilities. It asked conference to pressure the DHSS for more and better facilities and to press the General Council of the TUC to call a national demonstration against any new restrictive legislation before it was finally voted on.

It was this last clause which caused problems, as it put the

onus on them to organise. The Women's Advisory assured conference that they supported everything in the resolution but that the timing and nature of the demonstration should be left to them. "There are," we were told, "many different kinds of demonstrations."

Whatever a demonstration turns out to be, we'll be looking out for it.

The rest of the conference provided the usual spread of resolutions on nursery care, school meals, unemployment and so on with a few new ideas. 1) To amend the Equal Pay Act so that it provides for work of equal value and so that the onus of proof that equal pay should not be granted lies on the employer (onus of proof at present lies on the employee to prove her entitlement to equal pay). 2) To amend the Sex Discrimination Act, again by changing the onus of proof. 3) To abolish the married man's tax

allowance and replace it with higher Child Benefits in an effort to equalise the tax system.

Unfortunately conference decided not to push for positive discrimination for women on the General Council, a big issue at last year's conference (see SR 58). The motion was remitted and so did not get voted on.

Sadly most of these resolutions will turn up again and again on the agenda in one form or another with little hope of immediate implementation. Clearly most women attending the conference year after year agree on the basic material changes which women want: access to child care, fertility control, a fair deal at work, in training, promotion and pay, the right to an independent income and much more. The conference would perhaps be more constructive if some of the time were given over to discussing how we are going to get it! □

* Of the 138 five-a-side football teams in the annual Harris and Lewis Sports Festival held in Stornoway in March, 38 were women's teams. So at least 190 women are competing in football games in these two islands in the Outer Hebrides...

* Debbie Dowling from Neasden hit the headlines in March by hitting back at a bag-snatcher. He fled and she said she'd just learned some basic self-defence—"He looked ever so shocked when I thumped him"...

* The guilty verdict against *Gay News* on charges of blasphemous libel has been upheld by three appeal court judges. Now, with backing from readers and the Gay Activists Alliance, the paper plans to appeal to the House of Lords...

* The first woman train driver is now in training. Jacqueline Abberley, now 18, will have to do at least 500 turns of duty as a driver's assistant (formerly called "second man") and be 23 before she can take over a train...

* There are two ways in which women can fight retailers who insist on us providing a male guarantor for goods we want on credit. According to the EOC there is not only the Sex Discrimination Act but the Consumer Credit Act 1974. The Office of Fair Trading has said that it will regard evidence of the 'male guarantor' stipulation being imposed on a woman, as 'unfair or improper' business practice under the 1974 Act and companies may have their licences revoked or suspended.

* As all the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales assembled at Westminster Cathedral, Alison Gould of Roman Catholic Feminists went up to take communion in a T-shirt saying "Equal Rites for Women" on the front and "Equal Rights for Women" on the back...

* In Coventry recently Enoch Powell sounded off about immigration: "I happen to believe that primary allegiance can only be owed by a man, because ultimately allegiance is about whom one fights for and fighting is the specialised function of the male, so that the old rule that a woman takes her husband's nationality, not a man his wife's, is the right rule"...

* Women Against the Nazis, formed as a new section of the Anti Nazi League, aims to involve as many women as possible in a propaganda campaign against the National Front. Their immediate target is the May Council Elections, when the NF intend to stand 1,500 candidates. Contact WAN, Anti Nazi League, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2.



MAGGIE MURRAY

Six year old Sabrina Needham was the outright winner of the Under 8's section in the third North London Junior Chess Congress in April. She won eight out of ten games played over two days. Her sister Theresa was second in the Under 12's. The event is held annually in Islington, London, and is the biggest of its kind in the world; there were entrants from the USA, Europe and the Middle East. Chess has traditionally been a male preserve—at this Congress only 38 out of 462 entrants were girls or women. But encouragingly in the lower age groups more and more girls are beginning to play seriously—and win.

Maggie Murray

PENSION ECSTASIES

On April 6 the Government's new pension scheme came into operation. It will provide two pensions—a basic one replacing the present flat-rate pension and a second one, related to each person's earnings. Women will pay the same contributions and get the same benefits as men.

According to the DHSS "people can give up work for a time to bring up children without losing right to the basic pension" (give up what?). Of course, on the whole, men will get more than women, because to earn your full earnings related pension you

will have had to contribute to the new scheme for 20 years and it's mostly women who spend years working in their homes.

David Ennals, Secretary of State for Social Services was in ecstasies over this 'revolutionary' scheme, saying that it will really mean an end to poverty in old age—that depends on the size of your income in the first place and whether or not you've spent years on the dole. □

BOOKSHOP ATTACK

Last year several alternative/left-wing bookshops, including Centreprise, Bogle L'Ouverture, Headstart and Unity Books, were petrol bombed, burnt down or

received threatening phone calls. The latest attack was on the Corner Bookshop in Leeds, which is owned and controlled by feminists. Two of its three front windows were smashed in the early hours of Easter Monday—bricks were thrown hard enough to damage the bookshelves on the opposite side of the shop. This followed several visits from known local fascists.

The women running the bookshop say, "Our insurance company will replace the glass but they now insist on shutters, which we simply can't afford to buy—we would be very grateful for any donations to help us survive." □ The Corner Bookshop, 162 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2 (Leeds 454 125).

A day in the life of...

In *Spare Rib* 60 we asked readers to describe a day in their lives. "We want to know," we appealed, "how you cope with six kids or the Social Security office, with your job or your marriage or your multiple multiple relationships." We also wanted to hear readers' ideas—visionary or practical—about how their lives could change. This month we publish two responses.

"6.30 - stagger from bed"

23rd November

More than two years have gone by since *Spare Rib* printed my "Interview with myself" in Issue No 33. I cannot say my life has changed very much - the group I had joined studying 'Women & Society' folded after six meetings and my attempts at writing haven't been very fruitful. Just two or three poems published in the local paper and a rather obscure poetry mag.

I have chosen to write about the 23rd November, 1976, a Tuesday - the day I read my short story to the Writing class. I was told about this Local Education Authority class by a friend in the Friday morning WEA philosophy group I attend. The philosophy group, by the way, is thoroughly enjoyable and not a bit daunting to a middle-aged mum who has had a half-baked education.

Well, I knew there must be something wrong with my writing somewhere: so many short stories return-

ed with clipped-on rejection slips. The Tuesday class was well attended and presided over by Mrs X who reminded me too much of my hated gym teacher. Nevertheless I decided to give it a try.

Mrs X never seemed to actually handle a manuscript at all. The drill was that students read out their pieces aloud to be followed by criticism from Mrs X and then by any of the class who wanted. And did they? Like starving tom cats falling on their dinner. We were all female save one man, very persevering, who had a speech defect and would hand his story/poem/article to his neighbour to read for him. I dreaded having to expose myself, but I knew I should surely have to eventually, so I was determined to give it a go. A nice little income from my pen would be just the kind of independence I would like. What a pipe dream! But I must get back to this particular day:

6.30 - Stagger from bed - to loo - to kitchen. Fill kettle - boil - make tea. Sit down, all alone in kitchen, and drink tea. This time of solitude in the morning, which I missed so much when the children were babies, is a must for me now and the tea is an addiction. Run out of tea at this time of day and I experience withdrawal symptoms: headache, nausea. No, I am definitely NOT a morning person.

6.55 - Having brought myself round I switch on Radio for Weather and News.

7.00 - Take cups of tea up to teen-aged son and daughter (clean socks for son who has suffered from athlete's foot in the past). Cook bacon, eggs, fried bread for breakfast plus porridge because it's wintertime.

7.30 - Take cup of tea to husband.

7.40 - Daughter leaves for school.

8.15 - Husband eats breakfast. I feel strong enough by this time to swallow some cereal. And drink more tea. Then I do some clearing up, washing up, making beds and if there is enough dirty washing I shove it in the machine and start it going.

9.00 - Prepare casserole to cook in oven while I am out this morning, also rice pudding. Husband comes in every day to dinner at 1pm.

I get dressed, ready to go out. Having checked food in oven is OK, I leave house at 9.30, armed with my story. The class begins at 10 but it takes me half-an-hour to walk there.

Everyone chatting away nineteen to the dozen when I enter the room. These spare time writers are full of enthusiasm. There are two or three younger ones but most of them are middle aged or elderly. I am cheered to see my daughter's primary school teacher, now retired, and devoting every spare minute to writing. Mrs X calls us to order with a sharp rap on her desk with a ruler.

Mrs Y has had a success in *The*



THE WRITER AT WORK

DRAWING BY EMMY SMITH

Lady. We all clap and murmur our congratulations. Mrs Y is really dedicated and spends her summer holidays roaming over old ruins with her husband in tow, and taking photographs.

Eventually Mrs X's eyes rest on me. 'Mrs S, have you anything for us?' I wriggle in my seat and mutter something about a short story. 'Perhaps you'd like to read it to us,' she says.

Mouth dry. Heart pounds. Why? Well, off I go. But I have hardly got beyond the first sentence or two when she interrupts me - 'Never begin that way. Do you remember what I said last week? You don't start with description. Plunge straight into the action!' Little does she know yet - there is precious little action in my story anyway. But somehow I get through to the end and a deathly silence ensues as we await Mrs X's comments.

She clears her throat and looks me straight in the eye.

'- It lacks something. Ah, -' she says, 'it lacks emotion. It's almost matter-of-fact. You described a woman seeing her husband with a young, attractive girl - she would have strong feelings wouldn't she?' Here she appealed to the rest of the class who assented vigorously. Now, if there is one thing I have never been accused of, it is lack of emotion or feeling. Intellect, yes - but feeling, no. So I felt hurt. The whole experience was too much like having one's clothes suddenly ripped off in the High Street. I pretended to scribble on my manuscript and retreated into my shell and waited for the next masochist's reading.

'Now this week I thought I'd talk to you about the Confession story,' said Mrs X. 'This is a market well worth thinking about.' She did some simple arithmetic and informed us of the large number of these stories printed every year.

'It's like the short story,' she said, 'only written in the 1st person. You start with a problem to be solved. The story rises to a climax. (Here she broke off to do a little diagram on the blackboard.) Then all is resolved at the end.' She proceeded to give us a list of magazines; 'this one will brook no immorality,' she said, naming a well known publisher. 'The stories are usually written from the point of view of a young girl, such as would buy this type of magazine.' It seemed she had been successful in this field herself, and three thousand words at ten pounds a thousand was not to be sneezed at.

'But I used to think they were true,' I wanted to blurt out, 'it's like false pretences.'

As if to allay any doubts we might have: ' - they don't print the writer's name with this type of story,' she said. 'So there's

no need to worry. And it's usually a chatty, personal style that's adopted - Mrs Z in the corner was fortunate enough to sell one to *Loving* . . . So, it was elderly vicar's daughters, like Mrs Z, who wrote these True Romances in my daughter's mags. I was shattered.

One of our younger students started reading a Confession story she had written. 'No, no,' interrupted Mrs X. 'I don't think it's right to have the girl's father a bank manager. A working class background would be more acceptable. It's a question of identification.'

I couldn't resist commenting to my neighbour that they should have a computer to turn out these stories, since everything seemed to be done to a formula. 'Why should they,' she said. 'They've got us.'

'SSS-ssshhhh,' went the elderly woman on my other side. Mrs X banged her ruler.

I suppose I just couldn't take it. A few weeks later I packed it in. My stories were still coming back anyway.

I got a bit carried away by the writing class. The rest of that particular day was much like any other; meals, housework, children home from school, TV in the evening.

Sometimes I dream of centres where housewives (cancel out that hated word, let's say people at home) can go for learning, painting, doing crafts etc, in an informal way. I think some find the formality of enrolment for classes daunting, apart from the expense. It annoys me to see so many school buildings empty and useless during long summer vacations.

For myself, I know all I am doing is dabbling and I regret this, although I know I am fortunate to be able to do as much. I wish I had the training that would give me the confidence to do something more important. □

Emmy Smith

"Up as near 8.0 as I can manage"

27th June

Having just read *Spare Rib* from cover to cover, I thought what shall I do now? A typical day in my life would make pretty boring reading but writing about it would actually relieve the boredom.

I get up as near to eight as I can manage, always feeling more tired than when I went to bed, switch on radio 4 (saves reading the paper), have a bath, and more often than not, wash my hair. Make a cup of coffee, stand and drink it while looking at my wardrobe wondering what to wear for a change - put on my jeans as usual. 8.35 and I am out the house, 8.45 and I am at work.

I am a service controller, which

means I answer the phone to customers with broken machines and engineers who run around mending them. The job is basically more involved than that, but after three years it is routine. When the phones are quiet and the filing, expenses, letters, and vehicle accident claims are all sorted out, and the figures checked, I sit and read, or sometimes bring bits of my car up to the office to mend (my car is very old and spends quite a bit of time in bits).

My male boss listens to me 'go on' about equality and even reads my *Spare Rib* - I need to make him believe in it and perhaps change his ideas! I always seem to work with people who listen to me, say they agree, and then go away thinking 'she's a bit odd'. I think it's them - I'm quite normal. I just have this need to be always racing around - one day I think I will fly - until then a typical day goes on . . . Ring a few friends, see what they are doing, fill every night of the week and wonder when I will have one night at home to do nothing, which I don't want anyway.

Lunch time is always 12.30 - 1.30 exactly so I either meet someone in the pub, wander round the shops, go home and eat, or if I'm really energetic, I go swimming. 1.30 all hell is let loose on the phones for at least half an hour, then the afternoon begins and usually goes slower than the mornings, so I sit and dream of where I will go and what I will do - sometime - I don't know when. I look out the window and watch people wandering around - I wonder if they know what they want, or if they have already found it. 5.00 I am out the door and home by ten or quarter past.

Usually do some washing or ironing, sometimes a quick Hoover or dust. I hate it, but I dislike the dirt, so I get it over with as quickly as possible. I put on the record player, eat, read and then go out with a friend, usually female in the week, male at weekends (you can stay in bed longer). A typical evening is spent in the pub or someone's house - I make it to yoga once a week but still end up in the pub. I don't waste time always, when the time is right, I go to evening classes two nights a week. I have belonged to Women's Aid and a Women's group. The trouble is I always end up preferring to relate to one person at a time and I leave the group, but my friends are still people from various groups so I'm always in touch.

I keep meeting people who I really like and they seem to be spread across across England, so maybe soon I won't have a typical day, like the man (was it a man?) said 'no bird soars too high if he (it) soars with its own wings'. How can I fly - I don't even have the courage to give my name and address? □

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AT
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VAL WILMER

A workshop at the Birmingham National Women's Liberation Conference, 1978.



wires

Last Christmas the Women's Liberation Movement National Information Service transferred to York, after running in Leeds for two and a half years. Some past and present Wires workers got together over a reunion meal and much beer to discuss experiences and how we felt working at Wires had affected our lives. For us all, working collectively was very significant, but Wires meant much more—it was our women's action group, consciousness-raising group . . . sisterhood lived!

When Wires was set up after the Manchester Women's Liberation National Conference in 1975, we had to make ourselves accountable to the WLM as a whole. Many sisters expressed fears about any sort of national organisation—fears that a Women's Information, Referral and Enquiry Service would turn into a power-grabbing clique making decisions or speaking on behalf of the movement. We tried to avoid this by having a constitution, written by women at two special Wires National Conferences, which stated quite clearly what Wires should and should not do, so women could criticise the workers if they felt they were 'getting too big for their boots'. We arranged meetings every six months—advertised in Wires and open to any women, and also stated that Wires should move every two years to prevent it becoming the 'property' of a particular town or area.

All contributions to the Wires newsletter were accepted even if we didn't agree with them, provided they were from women and didn't contravene the Six Demands of the WLM. We felt that Wires should reflect all strands of opinion within the WLM. The collective were always free to state their own views afterwards, and readers could respond. We felt this was better than censorship. Later, for very practical reasons, we decided not to include very long articles unless they were sent on stencils or with money to cover the extra costs.



In practice we ended up exercising some degree of editorial control, in that we decided which information to reproduce from other publications. This seemed to be unavoidable; we did our best to be unbiased, although we'd probably all confess to favouring news from places outside London! The problem of accountability was always difficult when important decisions about Wires had to be made—for instance whether the newsletter should be on sale in bookshops. We always asked for opinions and even votes from subscribers, but got very little response. Very few women ever came to the six-monthly meetings. Eventually we just hoped that if nobody was actively complaining, we must be doing all right. It was always reassuring to meet women at conferences who told us how great the newsletter was!

At first we got very little feedback of any description—we just posted off the newsletters and never knew if anyone even read it. For a long time the newsletter was a rather dry collection of factual information about conferences and meetings, which we tried to liven up with book reviews, poems and quotes. But we began to get women writing in with their views and opinions and slowly debates developed around important topics.

The biggest controversy in our two year stint was the question of whether Wires should be sold in bookshops, and following from this, who is Wires for. Should it be an internal newsletter for women already involved in the WLM, or should we be reaching out to women who are interested but don't know a lot about it? The Wires collective felt that the newsletter might not be very relevant or interesting to women new to WLM, but that nevertheless it should be more easily available to them to judge for themselves; we didn't want to reinforce any image of the WLM as an exclusive 'club' only for those in the know. But our constitution stated that only women could subscribe and contribute to Wires and bookshops couldn't prevent men from buying the newsletter.

One of the reasons for wanting to sell Wires more widely was the business of money. The newsletter subscriptions have to finance the information service too, which makes it expensive, but nevertheless we were disappointed that more groups didn't subscribe. We had some very generous donations to get Wires going, but finance was always a problem. We decided from the very beginning that we should

pay ourselves. The idea was that when there was enough money we would have paid workers and volunteers, but then we realised that wouldn't work, as it would put the paid workers in a different position to the others. We worked for nothing for a while and started to pay ourselves as soon as we could afford it. The newsletter collators were always paid and despite only coming in every two and a half weeks were an integral part of the collective. Some people thought we should do it for nothing, but being paid was a political statement. People who say you should work free for 'the cause' often have money and can afford to. Women are expected to do unpaid work e.g. housework, servicing others—we want to get away from that. In any case none of us could have afforded to have kept up our commitment if we hadn't been paid.

One woman found office work alienating and left, but others felt it didn't matter if you were only typing or copying out addresses, it was who you were doing it for that counted. When you were in a bad mood or didn't want to do something, you didn't have to do it, you could do something else or not come in at all. You didn't have to make excuses. What we learnt was that if you trust people it pays off and people are responsible.

It was always our intention that women with children should be able to work at Wires and have time off when necessary. "That was marvellous. When I realised that, it completely knocked me off my feet. I could come and go to fit in with Beverly and have school holidays off. It really means a lot, otherwise you feel so discriminated against for being a parent, particularly a single parent. You can't get a job anyway because when you say you've got a kid they don't want to know."

For all its flexibility Wires ran very efficiently, much more so than most straight jobs. "In local government, where I now work, it's really slow because of the hierarchy. When you want something duplicated, you have to write it in long hand, for the secretary to type. The boss then has to approve it, it's retyped and taken to another office to be duplicated. All that can take about 10 days. Showing initiative or taking responsibility is regarded with suspicion."

Collective working, then, was a positive experience both for the individuals involved and for the running of Wires. We never found the difficulty some groups

have in meeting deadlines or making quick decisions. When an unexpected situation arose, such as being asked for information by a newspaper in a hurry, we'd promise to call them back in a few hours or the next day. That day's workers would discuss it, reach a possible solution and then contact everyone they could in the time, for their opinions. This was easier since most of the collective also met at other times from Wires anyway, at meetings or through being friends. Newcomers tended to integrate quickly into the Leeds feminist network. We were always a fairly small (four to nine women), stable group; few women stayed less than six months and several were involved throughout. Decisions that could wait were dealt with at the fortnightly meeting and the occasional emergency meeting was arranged.

But there were other problems. At the beginning 'leadership' was supposedly nonexistent. Everyone was expected to do everything immediately, answer letters, file, type, duplicate, sort newsletter items... it was pretty chaotic, and not everyone could cope. Sometimes we were expecting far too much of people. It's a question of working out when someone is ready to take something on, and then encouraging them to do it. And not get impatient when they take five times as long as you would!

Sharing skills wasn't always smooth and easy. We had to learn to criticise each other's work constructively, not moan behind backs or secretly correct errors when the person who'd made the mistake had left for the day. Oldtimers had to

face their responsibility to teach newcomers, something we all found hard at first as it seemed like giving orders. Sometimes oldtimers found it difficult to adapt to new suggestions; sometimes newcomers would avoid a certain task because another woman seemed 'best' at doing it. As time went on, some women did necessarily specialise; we only had one woman doing the accounts at any one time. Other specialisations weren't so necessary and change involved the specialist letting go her hold and communicating her skill and the others having confidence in their abilities and the willingness to learn.

In the end, the necessity to do things made us all able to do them; "my background told me I was feeble, but in a short time I was able to discard all that rubbish. The strength I got extended to my life outside Wires. I started to believe in myself."

We all feel more confident in dealing with sexism and other reactionary attitudes we meet in everyday life. Most of us now have got jobs which before we would not have had the confidence to apply for. Three of us have written a book about women. We say what we think at work, where once we might have been frightened of the consequences. We know we have the support of not being alone in our opinions. "I'm studying A levels at college, and I speak up now. The women respect me for what I am. They say I'm really great. I never had people saying that to me before."

The main thing we regret about Wires is that it never made enough money from



any sources. Perhaps that just shows that we are radical. That's why the state won't fund us. We were sad to see Wires go, but felt confident in passing it on to York, knowing that they'll find some problems, but much satisfaction from it just as we did. "It has been a real introduction to the women's movement, through working collectively. I was aware of the ideas but never lived them. It's a slow process but a better one. I learnt sisterhood." O

WIRES is now at the following address; 32A Parliament Street York (0904 35471). **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Individual rate—£6 a year, (£4 if poor), Group rate—£12 a year (£8 if poor) for two copies. **WIRES** comes out every fortnight—20p + postage. The Wires Collective are updating their information on Women's Liberation Groups, so if you belong to one, write to them for a questionnaire.

Women's Liberation Centres

This is a list of Women's Liberation Centres and other community centres where local Women's Liberation groups can be contacted. We intend to publish a list of local WL groups for areas where no centre exists—can you send us one address through which women's groups in your area can be contacted.

EIRE

DUBLIN: 45 Arlsbury Grove, Dundrin, Dublin 14

ENGLAND

BIRMINGHAM: 76 Brighton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12 (021 4492931)

BRIGHTON: Old Presbyterian Church, North Road, Brighton (0273 65911)

BRADFORD: 4th Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate, Bradford 1, West Yorks.

BRISTOL: 44 The Grove, Bristol 1 (0272 22760)

CAMBRIDGE: 48 Eden Street, Cambridge (0223 63886)

CHELTENHAM: 30 St Georges Place, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (0242 24656)

COVENTRY: 24 Regent Street, Coventry (0203 28955)

LANCASTER: 86 King Street, Lancaster (0524 64007)

LEICESTER: 79 Laurel Road, Leicester

LIVERPOOL: Lark Lane Community Centre, Lark Lane, Liverpool 17

LONDON:

A WOMAN'S PLACE: 42 Earlham Street, WC2 (01 836 6081)

BRENT: 138 Minet Avenue, NW10 (01 965 3324)

CAMDEN: Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Road, NW3 (01 794 3881)

KENTISH TOWN: 158 Grafton Road, NW5

LEWISHAM & DEPTFORD: 74 Deptford High Street, SE8 (01 692 1581)

NORTH PADDINGTON: 510 Centre, Harrow Road, W9

SOUTH LONDON: 45 North Street, SW4

STOKE NEWINGTON: 1 Cazenove Road, N16 (01 806 6664)

WALTHAMSTOW: 161 Mark House Road, E17

WHITECHAPEL: 3 Adelina Grove, E1 (01 515 1174)

WOMEN'S ARTS ALLIANCE:

10 Cambridge Terrace Mews off Chester Gate, NW1.

01 935 1841

WOMEN'S RESEARCH & RESOURCES CENTRE: 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1 (01 253 2568)

MANCHESTER: 62 Nelson Street, Manchester

NORWICH: St Benedict's Street Community Centre, Norwich, Norfolk.

NOTTINGHAM: 26 New-castle Chambers, Angel Row, Nottingham (0602 411475)

OXFORD: 88 Bullingdon Road Oxford (0865 724581)

SHEFFIELD: 52 Langsett Road, Sheffield 6 (0742 336514)

YORK: 32A Parliament Street, York (0904 35471)

SCOTLAND

ABERDEEN: St Catherine's Community Centre, Aberdeen

CAITHNESS: 2 Bank Place, Thurso, Caithness

EDINBURGH: 160 Fountain-bridge, Edinburgh (031 229 0053)

GLASGOW: 57 Miller Street, Glasgow 1 (041 221 1177)

WALES

CARDIFF: 108 Salisbury Road, Cathays, Cardiff

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TALKS AND CONFERENCES

Women in the Trade Unions Today
27 April. 7.30 talk at Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Speaker Terry Marsland. Adm 20p. Details from 01-253 1485.

Marxist Theory and Feminist History

28 April. 7.30 History Group talk at the Women's Research and Resources Centre (WRR), 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Speaker Barbara Taylor. Women only.

Sexism and Feminism

29/30 April. Mixed teach-in at York University. Workshops on marriage and the family, women in the unions, wages for housework, sexism in language, children's literature, radical feminism, women and education, pregnancy, health... Accommodation, creche available. Details from the Women's Liberation Group c/o Students Union, Goodricke College, University of York, Heslington, York.

Feminist Therapists' Working Conference

29/30 April. In Hungerford Junior Primary School, Hungerford Rd, London N7. Feminists who spend a substantial amount of their time doing therapy, and who wish to work towards the evaluation and improvement of training in order to better meet the needs of women, are invited. Details from 01-607 2864.

Women and Education

2 May. 7.30 talk at the University of Warwick, Coventry. Speaker Keith Hoskins. First in a series of lectures and seminars organised by the Arts Faculty Sex Equality Group. Details from Jennifer Lorch 0203 24011.

Birth and Birth Control—any Choice in Cambridge?

3 May. 7.30 meeting at Mawson Hall, Mawson Rd, Cambridge to discuss NHS maternity facilities in Cambridge.

Transacting Women in West Africa
5 May. 8.00 WRR talk, as above. Speaker Carol MacCormack (Cambridge).

In Sickness and in Health

6 May. 10.00-4.30 conference at Essex University, Colchester. Speakers Lesley Doyal on sexism

in medicine, Mary Ann Elston on women and Health care in the home, Angela Phillips on the new *Our Bodies Ourselves*, Dr Barbara Jacobs on the women's health movement and general practice. Workshops in the afternoon. Especially for people involved in the health services, but also for those with a general interest. Adm £1 (50p students). Details from CH Longworth, Liaison Officer, Essex University.

West London Women's Conference

6 May. 10.00-5.00 at the Methodist Church Hall, Lancaster Rd, London W11. Us and Them—workshops exploring the divisions between women inside and outside the movement. Displays, bookstalls. Bring food. Volunteers for creche needed. Details from Jo (01-228 9734 day) or Debby (01-579 5470 eve).

Pregnancy Testing Conference

6 May. 11.00-5.00 at Newnham College, Sidgwick Ave, Cambridge. Topics include the politics of pregnancy testing, ways to improve the NHS, the menopause, sharing experience. Enquiries to the Cambridge Pregnancy Advisory Group c/o Irene McMorland, 16 Clare St, Cambridge (0223 311665).

Women and Depression

6 May. 10.00-2.00 meeting at John Keats School, Avenue Rd, London NW8. Organised by Camden and Islington Community Health Council—Women and Health sub group. Creche, snack lunch, stalls.

Women & Sexuality Conference

6 May. In Leeds. "We want this conference to cover the whole span of women and sexuality from exclusive lesbianism to exclusive heterosexuality, pre-organic women, monogamy, promiscuity, celibacy and absolutely everything else you want to talk about." Disco and free beer for those who register in advance. Food, creche run by men, accommodation (inform the organisers about numbers and age of children, and whether you need somewhere to crash). Adm £1 (50p non-earners). Contact Erica c/o Corner Bookshop, 162 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2 (0532 454125 day or 458137 eve).

Women and Health

9 May. 7.30 talk at the University of Warwick, Coventry, as above. Speaker Margaret Stacey.

Divorce, Maintenance and Custody
13 May. 1.30-5.00 meeting at Cannonball House, Castle Hill, Edinburgh. Third in a series organised by the Edinburgh Campaign for Legal and Financial Independence for Women, the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, and East of Scotland WEA, to discuss the impact the new Scottish Assembly will have on women. Creche. Adm 50p (reduction for claimants). Details from 031-661 7315.

Help for Working Mums and One Parent Families

13 May. 10.00-2.00 at Camden Exhibition Hall, Camden St, London NW1. Organised by Camden & Islington Community Health Council as above.

Scottish Socialist Feminist Conference

13/14 May. At the Rosevale Centre, Glasgow. It's open to "all women who support the six demands of the women's liberation movement, and the political necessity of an autonomous women's movement, and wish to discuss the integration of socialist ideas into the struggle against women's oppression." Register in advance (£3 incl of food, papers, tea and coffee) with Mary Brand, 131 Montgomery St, Edinburgh 7 (031 661 7315).

Anarcho-Feminism

13/14 May. 10.00 conference at the Squat, Devas St (off Oxford Rd), nr University Union, Manchester. Workshops on work situations, lifestyles, childcare, sexuality, relationships and emotions, and special interest workshops like massage, Emma Goldman, modern women's writings. Social on Saturday night, food, creche, crashpads (but let them know in advance if you need one). Adm £1.50 in advance or £2 on the day. Contact Mary (061 881 0477).

Women's Activities Weekend

13/14 May. In Nelson, Lancs. Organised by the Women's Studies Group in Nelson in conjunction with Nelson and Colne College. "The idea is to bring women of different backgrounds and interests together in the NW region." Exhibition on women in history, feminist films, and possible workshops on health, women in the mills, shops, factories, traditional women's roles, women's creativity, racism and fascism. Saturday open to all; Sunday women only. Creche, food, social. Details from Angela Kelley, Women's Studies Group, Nelson & Colne College, Scotland Rd, Nelson, Lancs BB9 7YT.

Images of Women in Art

16 May. 7.30 talk at the University of Warwick, Coventry, as above. Speaker Anthea Callan.

Women in Public Service

17 May. 6.00 meeting in the Lecture Theatre, Centre for Environmental Studies, 62 Chandos Place, London WC2. Organised by the Fawcett Society. Speaker Hilary Halpin JP (Chairperson

Islington Juvenile Court and former chairperson GLC Children's Cttee).

Communist University of Feminism
20/21 May. In Leeds. Details from Claire Wigzell, 30 Methley Drive, Leeds 7.

The Feminisation of Clerical Work 1870-1970

23 May. 7.30 talk at the University of Warwick, Coventry, as above. Speaker Geoff White.

Wessex Gay Women's Conference

27 May. Write to the Wessex Gay Women's Group c/o Sappho, The Basement, 20 Dorset Sq, London NW1 with ideas and suggestions. All gay women welcome.

What kind of service can women expect from GPs?

28 May. 8.00 discussion at the Everyman Bistro, Hope St, Liverpool, led by two women from the Leeds Women's Health Group.

London Anarcho-Feminist Conference

2/3 June. At Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. Send a SAE for details to Kate Hall, 27 Bridge Ave, London W6.

Bisexuality and the Women's Movement

Early June. Details from Naurika Lenner, 3A Wedderburn House, Wedderburn Rd, London NW3 (01-794 6358).

CAMPAIGNS

Abortion

National Abortion Campaign Conference

29/30 April. At Sheffield Students Union, Graves Building, Western Bank, Sheffield. Theme: positive legislation. Food, creche, accommodation available. Details from NAC, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303) or Felicity 0742 730990.

How to get an Abortion

An explanatory leaflet guiding you through the sorts of difficulties you may encounter if you want an abortion, as well as providing an address list, advisory services and clinics. Available from NAC (send SAE), as above.

Day-care Abortion Kit

Designed to help groups run a day-care campaign (see p26). Available at £1 from NAC, as above.

Sex Discrimination Act Amendment Campaign

It aims to amend the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. Members petition for areas such as social security, pensions and income tax to be covered by anti-discrimination legislation. Information, petition forms, and leaflets are available from the Nottingham SDA Amendment Campaign c/o 6 Shelt Hill, Woodborough, Nottingham.

FUN AND MUSIC

Frankie Armstrong & Sandra Kerr
28 April. 8.00 at the Brixton Socialist Club, The Canterbury, Canterbury Cresc, London SW9.

Scottish Women's Liberation Carnival
June. In Edinburgh. Needed: women with silly traits/serious skills for workshops... Contact the Women's Liberation Workshop, 160 Fountain Bridge, Edinburgh (031 554 6318).

Jam Today
Our feminist rockband is together again with new women and new music. They will be available for gigs from the end of May. Contact them at 40 Croftdown Rd, London NWS or 01-485 2499.

Olivia Records
Olivia is an American feminist recording company, which produces and distributes a variety of feminist and lesbian feminist music. Records and songbooks are now available from the Women's Arts Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1 and A Woman's Place, 42 Earham St, London WC2. If any women in or out of London want to stock Olivia Records in women's centres or bookshops contact Nicole or Tierl c/o 15 Fortis Green Ave, London N2.

PROJECTS

Women's Liberation Bookbus Collective
New contact address: c/o 37 Quernmore Rd, London N4.

Hysterectomy and Ovariectomy
Any sisters who've had one or both of these operations and want to contact others in a similar position to discuss physical and emotional realities phone or write to Cynthia, 83 Bartholomew Rd, London NW5 (01-267 1944).

Feminist Architect Wanted Urgently
"We are a group of women organising for a permanent women's building in London. We are looking for an architect to advise us who would be required to estimate conversion costs and draw up plans for submission to councils." Contact Ursula for details (01-328 1226).

Feminists Against Nuclear Power
"I have been involved in the anti-nuclear movement and feel discouraged by its weak connection with the feminist movement." Any women interested in working as a group to oppose nuclear power contact Sheryl Crown, Dept of Interdisciplinary Human Studies, University of Bradford, Bradford BD7 1DP, West Yorks, or 0274 493010.

Moss Side Community Press
Six women run the only community press in Manchester

(since Sept 76). They print magazines, newspapers, pamphlets for local women's (community) groups, individuals and various grass roots organisations, as well as posters, cards, calendars. If you need some printing done why not give them the job. They're also very glad to share their knowledge and skills with other women. Contact Moss Side Community Press Women's Co-op, 21A Princess Rd, Manchester 14 (061 226 7115).

Early Parenthood
Marcia Davis and Angela Grunsell want to hear from married/single/communally living mothers and fathers about their joys, anxieties, hassles in the first weeks and months of parenthood. They are collecting material for a book about this time in people's lives aimed to help those going through it to feel less guilty/lonely/abnormal. They are aiming to counter the oppression of the baby care manuals. Contact them at 17 Lowman Rd, London N7.

GRAIN
"Gay Rural Aid and Information Network aims to give moral support to rural gays, enabling them to give each other practical support and teach each other skills. It also arranges visits to relevant events and has information sheets on relevant books, magazines, suppliers and so on. It operates on a non-sexist and non-ageist basis." For more details contact them c/o 50 Riverview Grove, London W4, and enclose SAE.

Women's Photography Group
"I would like to start a women's photography group in the Camden Islington area of London with the aim of working on joint projects and discussing and analysing photographic images in general." Contact Jill Pack (01-837 4423).

PLAYS AND FILMS

Films by Women Directors
6.30 at Kingsway College, Hugh Middleton Bldg, Basement Photography Dep, Sans Walk. London EC1.
15 May. *Lions Love* by Agnes Varda.
15 May. *The Other Side of the Underneath* by Jane Arden.
29 May. *Legacy* by Karen Arther.

Whores D'Oeuvres
A new play by Michelene Wandor, performed by Omoro Theatre Company. It examines the implications of prostitution in our society. Until 29 April. 1.15 at the ICA Theatre, Nash House, 12 Carlton Terrace, London SW1. Tickets 75p.

What the Hell is She Doing Here?
New Gay Sweatshop (women's company) show with music. Until 29 April. 1.15 at the ICA
3-7 May Oval House
9-13 May Haymarket Studio, Leicester
15 May Loughborough College
17 May Gay Teachers Group



(venue to be announced).

24 May Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Barbican.
End of May. Probably in Essex and Eastern Region.

6 June Camden NALGO (venue to be announced).

12 June- Three weeks until July 2. Drill Hall, Chenies St, London WC1. Details from 01-673 5992 or 01-691 3568.

In Our Way

New play by the Women's Theatre Group about the equality legislation (see reviews).
24/25 May. 7.30 at the Oval House, 54 Kennington Oval, London SE11.

Female Complaints

The Coventry Lesbian Theatre Group who performed *Female Complaints* at the Birmingham Women's Liberation Conference can be booked for any Saturday or Sunday evening. They will travel to perform to women only. The performance takes about 1½ hours and they only ask for expenses. Contact them at 0203 441993.

PUBLICATIONS

Virago

"VIRAGO is looking for new fiction. So far we have done mostly translations or reprints of novels first published some time ago, but we're very keen to publish feminists writing fiction in this country, now. We'd be very pleased to get manuscripts." Send them, with postage, to Virago, 5 Wardour St, London W1V 3HE.

Lesbian Health Issues

An annotated bibliography can be ordered from the Santa Cruz Women's Health Centre c/o Mary O'Donnell, 250 Locust St, Santa Cruz, CA95060, US. £1 incl. postage. They welcome comments and additions.

Science for People—on Health

This is a must for all women struggling around health, with some very informative general material on the role of the state and medicine, "where doctors come from", and on class and ill health. There are also some good

descriptive pieces on the women's health movement, the struggle of disabled people, and the fight at the EGA to get an improved health service for women, as well as a debate on the possibilities of alternative medicine in western capitalist society. All the way through the stress is on our need to fight the ideological stronghold that the medical profession has, and the need to struggle for a health system that is under our control, based on prevention rather than cure. 30p + postage from BSSRS, 9 Poland St, London W1.

Lynne Harne

Reports from China: 1953-1976, Joan Robinson

These essays are based on Joan Robinson's six visits to China and cover China's economic recovery (1963), China's break with the Soviet Union, the Great Leap Forward and The Cultural Revolution. She writes with clarity and honesty. It is absorbing to follow the development of her analyses, that become more complex with each of her visits. £1 available from Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, 152 Camden High Street, London NW1.

Barbara Charles

Sexism, Politics and Revolution in Mao's China, Raya Dunayevskaya

In the first essay—Chiang Ch'ing, Hua Kuo-feng in Post-Mao China—Dunayevskaya doesn't know who to knock first, Hua, Ch'ing, Mao, or Ch'ing's biographer Roxane Witke. In the second essay—Alienation and Revolution: A Hong Kong Interview with a Chinese refugee—she enlightens all feminists and socialists with her pronouncement: "... Mao was no sort of Marxist... Were it not for the fact that he had state power over a vast land of 700 million human beings, no one would pay any attention to his sophomoric essays." If you've bought this pamphlet, don't worry—it's so thin that torn into strips it'll easily flush away. 50c available from Women's Liberation, News and Letters Committees, 1900 East Jefferson, Detroit, Michigan 48207.

BC

There is a clear feeling among those of us fighting for a woman's right to choose that—with a few months ahead before the next restrictive bill appears on the scene—now is the time to take the offensive. This is particularly important in Scotland where the proposed Assembly would have the power to legislate on abortion. Inevitably there are sharp differences of opinion, both on questions of principle and tactics.

Those who feel it is time to draft positive legislation find themselves embroiled in arguments about 'foetal viability' and 'upper time limits'. (Should abortion be allowed as late as the individual woman wants, or should there be a legal limit at the point at which the foetus is capable of separate survival—and if so, when is that?) For instance, the Abortion Law Reform Association's model bill, which would decriminalise abortion and allow women the right of absolute choice up to 28 weeks, has been criticised by some for failing to repeal the law which imposes an upper time limit (the Infant Life Preservation Act).

Opponents of ALRA's bill assert that a bill with any limitations attached limits the concept of choice. They add that, in practice, even under the present restrictive Act, 80% of women approach their doctor for an abortion before their ninth week of pregnancy; very few—less than 1%—seek help after 20 weeks. They claim that unrestricted choice, if combined with adequate facilities, would reduce late abortions even further, without it being necessary to put a limit to the right to choose.

Another suggestion is a '12-Week Bill', which would allow abortion on demand until the twelfth week of pregnancy—after that time the 1967 Act would be used, until that too was repealed/amended. Its supporters argue that such a bill would enhance the drive

Good Laws & DAYCARE

An 18 month prison sentence has just been handed out to a Leicester GP, Dr Madhusudhan Shivadikar, for procuring abortions. The case came to light when a woman was admitted to the Royal Infirmary with a septic miscarriage. Whatever the rights and wrongs of taking £60 for performing a botched up abortion, the more important issue is WHY did these women have to resort to this, ten years after the Abortion Act came into force?

The answer is depressingly simple: Leicester is the most under-funded health area in Trent, which is one of the worst-off regions in Britain. Add to this a senior gynaecologist who is a member of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and it is perhaps not surprising that only 18% of abortions in the area are carried out on the National Health. Even the nearest charity clinic is 50 miles away, so for many women there are no alternatives to the backstreets.

Prosecutions for illegal abortions are rare these days, but this case brings home what lack of facilities and lack of choice actually mean to women. Facilities and choice will be the two major themes of the National Abortion Campaign conference in Sheffield on April 29-30. Sue Roalman, who has been active in East London National Abortion Campaign, writes here about the issues facing the conference and the progress of the day-care campaign.

for early, safe abortions—they point out that day-care techniques are only available to women under three months pregnant. This, they add, could avoid the emotive area of 'viability' and so have a more realistic chance of winning Parliamentary approval.

But within the pro-choice movement many dispute that the time is right for drafting positive legislation in any form. They argue the difficulty of winning support from a reactionary Labour Government, saying that no legislation would be passed anyway without active mass support outside Parliament. So they see it as a priority to fight for facilities and to increase public awareness of what a woman's right to choose means—for instance by clarifying the fundamental aims of NAC in a charter or manifesto to use in campaigning.

Others feel there's no real choice until we have control over means—they want not just more state facilities but positive encouragement to self-help groups which they see as a direct threat to state control of fertility.

One point of unity has been the importance of day-care. At the moment there are only nine day-care units open in Britain, most offering only a restricted service. One of these has been open since last July at the London Hospital, Mile End.

Professor Peter Huntingford, who campaigned for and runs the service, has always insisted that it should meet total local need. But it has only ever been able to operate on a limited basis, with insufficient funding, a reduced complement of staff and curtailed opening hours. The clinic's intake is restricted to women from Tower Hamlets who have been referred there by doctors or other approved agencies. About half the women in neighbouring Newham and Hackney are forced into the private sector for abortions.

Within its own catchment it is not clear whether the service meets local need. At least a third of NHS abortions in Tower Hamlets are still performed in hospital. Nor is it clear how many women resort to private abortions. Signs are that the situation is improving. Both the major charities—Brook Advisory and BPAS—have been referring Tower Hamlets women who reach them back to the service, according to its administrator, Hilda Bartle. She also says that about 50 local GPs from a total of 86 are now referring women to the service. Also a second operating session (at the moment there is only one a week plus two consulting sessions) will shortly be offered. However there are still problems about increasing public access to the service. For instance, it is the deliberate policy of health administrators to restrict demand by not

publicising the service in the borough. Another problem is the attitude of local doctors: if they are anti-abortion, they simply won't refer to the day-care unit.

The local NAC group is campaigning for a service catering for the whole community, and Peter Huntingford recently submitted proposals to the Area Health Authority for extending the service to Newham and Hackney women. Again the question of tactics arises: how should the 'economic argument' be used within a day-care campaign?

To cut-hungry administrators, the value of day-care has nothing to do with the choice it allows women. To them, it relates to the comparative financial savings day-care represents over hospitalised abortion. In outlining the proposals for expansion, Huntingford argues that day-care can facilitate choice for women, but he does not disdain the financial facts. He estimates that within the City and East London health area, an improved day-care service meeting local need would still save £6,000 in the first year and £20,000 annually thereafter, over the present service where close to half Newham and Hackney women are denied NHS abortions at all and the others are hospitalised for a number of days, usually for no medically-required reason.

Campaigners in these three East London boroughs are making use of this information while emphasising the aspects of choice and quality of care over the question of money. Implicitly they are challenging the practice of some doctors who punish women as they treat them, whether by ignoring, lecturing, sterilising or lying to them.

Day-care is being taken up with enthusiasm by NAC and women's groups who are tired of fighting defensively against Parliamentary attacks. For those who would like information on how to campaign for day-care a special 'kit' has been prepared by NAC which includes much statistical and medical data. Limited numbers are available for groups at £1 each from NAC, 30 Camden Road, London NW1. ●

In an article on the use of Depo-Provera in SR 69 it was said that in 1976, 2% of women using the Mile End day-care unit were given DP. In fact that figure was for the London Hospital as a whole and not for the clinic, which did not open until 1977. We apologise for this inaccuracy. A letter on the subject will be published next month.

ABORTION Advice?

TELEPHONE

Birmingham	021-643 1461
Bournemouth	02016 77720
Brighton	0273 509726
Cardiff	0222 372389
Chester	0244 27113
Glasgow	041 204 1832
Leeds	0532 443861
Liverpool	051 227 3721
London	01 222 0985
Manchester	061 236 7777
Sheffield	0742 738326

BPAS Charitable Trust
for Pregnancy Testing, Abortion and Sterilisations.
Operations arranged after medical consultation,
at our own non-profit clinics.

GALICIA, State of Women

Galicia is a unique region in north-west Spain which Maria-Luisa Rey Henningsen visited as an anthropologist in the 1960s. She was amazed to find Galician women not only inheriting land but taking the lead in every area of life—in striking contrast to the rest of patriarchal Catholic Spain.

Translated by *Anne Born* with an afterword by *Olivia Harris*.

The woman in black wearing a big straw hat, working in the fields alone or in company with others, is an integral part of the Galician landscape. Everywhere women are to be seen driving the ox-drawn plough, watering the fields, preparing the ground for seed, harvesting potatoes and maize, tending the cattle at pasture, spinning wool from the sheep.

In the coastal areas especially, it is the mother who is head of the family. She owns the farm, the stock, and the implements. Throughout the whole state of Galicia, 45 per cent of the women own farms. But the women of Galicia also hire themselves out as labourers. They make up about half of the employed labour force. Repairs to the secondary road network are carried out almost exclusively by women. In many regions women inherit land, and in several fishing communities it is the women who inherit the fishing-boats, even if they have brothers. Women often go out fishing as well, but even when they allow the men to take a turn at the nets, they themselves stand on shore shouting and screaming directions to the men out at sea!

In his book on the folk-beliefs of Galicia, Jesus Rodriguez Lopez says that in pre-Christian times Galician women who had given birth insisted on their husbands being confined with them in childbed, until they were able to get up. In return, the women saw to it that their husbands were waited upon in exactly the same way as the new mothers. Some few examples of this practice have been noted in more modern times in very remote districts. But what still regularly takes place to this day in the towns is that the husband stays at home to look after his wife and newborn child for forty days. During this time the husband is expected to spoil his wife, cook the dishes she asks for, and

find her the best wine, often having to travel long distances to get it.

In this region to have a daughter is good fortune, and if the first child is a girl parents may not want more children. Family planning seems to have been practised in Galicia for longer than people can remember. When I asked women why there were so few large families in country areas, while town-dwellers often have numerous children, I discovered that the sheath and douche methods of contraception were in common use.

One woman confided laughingly to me that she practised a better method, one that her mother had taught her. The husband was made to lie on his back, with instructions to remain passive, while the woman worked over him until she achieved satisfaction. She continued: "If he starts to get excited and wants to join in the game, you give him a pinch in the groin, and that cools him down. He may get a bit small, but then you have to make do with the stub of the cigar as best you can." "Usually it grows big again, you know, but he must keep still and not move, otherwise there's trouble," another woman present explained, and the first added: "When you've sparked off yourself, he can go outside and shake his filth off himself."

In contrast to patriarchal families, where it is the eldest son who inherits the farm, here it may be any one of the daughters who inherits. The mother selects the daughter who pleases her most. The other daughters may get a plot of land if there is sufficient, and a small sum of money on their wedding-day, or when they choose to leave home. The brothers get nothing. If the parents are wealthy and wish to give a son a marriage portion, it will be in the form of clothes or produce; money gifts are rare. The mother decides



SPANISH NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE

whether any of the children are to have higher education, and where they will study. The children are considered to be hers, and the father never interferes with her decisions.

When the daughter-successor marries, her husband moves into *her* home, where his role is like that of a farmhand. He, together with his father-in-law, and any brothers-in-law there may be, are at the disposal of his mother-in-law. But he knows that as she gradually grows older, more and more of her functions will be assumed by his wife, so that when her mother dies she will step into her shoes as head of the family, regardless of whether her father is still alive or not.

But as long as the mother-in-law is alive it is she who makes every decision regarding the buying and selling of livestock and land, improvements to the farm, when and what is to be done, and when to harvest. It is the women too who go to market and decide on prices; but as they live within a larger male-dominated society they may take their husbands along for form's sake, and supply them with cash in advance so that it will look correct when something has to be paid for. But it is the wife who inspects the animals and runs her hand over them, and haggles over the price. When a man is permitted to take the livestock to market himself he boasts about it as a special favour, although he is well aware that he must abide by the instructions he has received at home about the price, and hand over every penny to his mother-in-law.

While there is a well-defined separation of men's and women's work in most patriarchal families, in these homes most types of work are regarded as suitable for men and women alike. The son, or sons-in-law, are set to scrubbing floors, lighting the fire on the open hearth, kneading the dough, and so on. Even churning butter, which in other areas is considered to be a decidedly female task, is men's work here. The men participate in the field work and in looking after the livestock too.

In these particular areas the women also attend agricultural meetings. Many take

their husbands with them, but it is the women who have the say, and the men are scarcely allowed to voice their opinion.

For several years the Spanish Government has been engaged in formulating a substantial project for land reform in Galicia. Every so often the experts call a meeting of local farmers to discuss alterations in the field system, roadmaking, schoolbuilding, and water and electricity supplies. The agricultural experts, who are not generally Galician, are constantly surprised when they visit these districts. They send invitations to the meetings to the men, but find on their arrival a hall filled chiefly with women. Some of them will be accompanied by their husbands, and it is to them that the experts direct their questions. It is the women who answer, though. They explain the silence of their husbands with some such excuse as "My husband is too shy to talk", or "My husband doesn't really understand about that", or "My husband doesn't want to be involved in these matters". It was the same with the interviews we conducted in homes. The women gathered eagerly around the tape-recorder, and chatted freely about everything. The men stayed passively in the background and only when we said we wanted to hear the men's side of things were they permitted to approach. The men were generally very reserved, and could not express themselves as well as the women.

We asked them why they allowed the women to take on all the responsibility and make all the decisions. The answer was almost invariably the same: "That's how it has always been here. The women have developed their intelligence far more than we have, and that must be the reason for their owning everything and being allowed to will it to whom they please. It is they who keep the families going."

Several proverbs and folksongs express the situation in this way: "My daughter's children are without doubt my grandchildren. But I don't know whose my daughter-in-law's children are." If one points out to them that things are different in other places they say they are quite aware of this but "every land has its

laws and every house its customs". And the truth is that in these parts the men accept these norms as natural in the same way that women in other places accept their role as the subjected sex.

Certainly the men complain of their plight, especially when the women are not present, but only some of them resort to the obvious means of escape: to sail away, or emigrate. Men who are absent from home for a while send almost all their earnings home to mother-in-law, though on their return some try to emancipate themselves and move away with their wife and children. But the bond between mother and daughter is so strong that the wife often deserts her husband and remains with her mother.

At other times it is the mother-in-law who throws out her son-in-law, for, as she says, when the men have been away they are impossible to deal with! They come home with money and refuse to work on equal footing with the women any more. They stir up trouble among the men who allow themselves to be ruled by their wives. "It's all very well for you! You come from places where men know their worth. But as for us, we're worth nothing here!" is the resigned comment from their countrymen. A man was asked why he did not emigrate like others. He answered that he had slaved all his life for his mother-in-law, who had promised to give him the money for his journey. "But now she says that I can't be spared . . . I haven't even the money for my tobacco . . . she buys it herself to stop me going into town."

At three times during the agrarian year—at Shrovetide, seed-time and harvest—the men get an opportunity to usurp the women's authority, by a ritual that takes the form of a battle between men and women.

One man described how during the maize harvest three girls had attacked him, debagged him and beaten him up, so that he had to make his way home naked, trying to hide among the tall maize plants. "Yes," said one of the girls, who was present. "We did it because he would keep annoying us by saying, 'Long live trousers!' We shouted back, 'Long live skirts!' and in the end we punished him by taking all his clothes off and torturing him until he shouted, 'Long live skirts!'"

The Shrovetide ritual battles usually go on in the kitchen. The man has to try to drag the woman to bed in the room adjoining the kitchen, and 'lay' her there (symbolically, though occasionally in fact). The woman has to try to drag the man out into the stable. All the onlookers clap and applaud while the fight is in progress. "This year a woman was the victor," we heard during an interview in 1964. "She dragged the man into the stable and let him go without his trousers. His friends shouted after him: 'You have lost for all of us!' and hurled things after him."

The women enjoy great sexual freedom and even though marriage is considered to be the best state (it gives the family the necessary legal authority), it is no shame for a girl to have a child out of wedlock. On the contrary! The womb and female sexuality have a patron saint who is



The mother-in-law makes every decision regarding the buying and selling of livestock and land, improvements to the farm, or when to go to harvest.



Women make up half the employed workforce. Repairs to secondary roads are carried out almost exclusively by women.

called Santa Comba; the most remarkable thing about her is that she was a witch! Even the priests admit this, though they explain that it was only in her youth. Later she was converted to Christianity and did penance for the rest of her life; so she has her altars in the churches to this day. But the rituals surrounding the worship of Santa Comba are the ancient ones still. The women go to her on the first Sunday in May to beg her to relieve their menstrual pains, give them a safe delivery . . . or to ensure that the child they are carrying may be a daughter.

Carmelo Lison Tolosana wrote a detailed description of the matriarchy in his book, *Antropología Social de Galicia* (published in 1971), from which some of the examples in this article are taken.

An Afterword

We live with the knowledge that society is male-dominated and has been for most of human history; but it is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that men's control is uniformly powerful, and that women's oppression is the same the world over.

Some people argue that capitalism has begun to provide women with the opportunity to improve their position, and that in earlier forms of society women's subordination was much greater. Peasant communities in particular are thought to be examples of extreme patriarchal domination, as any number of nineteenth cen-

tury novels illustrate, or to take a more recent example, the portrait of peasant life in the new Sardinian film *Padre Padrone* (directed by the Taviani brothers).

Given this picture, one would expect that in Spain, with its extreme *machista* culture and dominated by the strength of the Catholic church, peasant women would be in a particularly bad position. Maria Luisa Rey Henningsen's account of the life of women in parts of rural Galicia gives a quite different picture. Near the coast, women's control over peasant property and their position of authority in many spheres of life is so great that it has sometimes been called a matriarchy.

Whether that term seems the right one depends on your point of view. Certainly here it seems that some women dominate men pretty much in the ways that elsewhere men dominate women, though it's the mother who has the authority, not just women in general. The daughters who fail to inherit have to go work in the towns just like the sons.

It is very unusual for rural women to take part in public life as these Galician farmers do. But even if the mother, or the mother-in-law depending on who you are, is head of the household, women still work hard. The men do some of the housework, but at the same time there are also gangs of women working on the roads. But this shows up one of the most interesting things that emerges about these Galicians—how little they differentiate between the sexes. Both in work and

in the behaviour that is expected of them there seems to be little of the segregation of sex-roles that is familiar from our own society, and from many other parts of the world. In rural areas there seems to be little sexual division of labour; women are not confined to the domestic sphere, to the interior world of the home, and men have no monopoly over the streets and public encounters—a pattern that is familiar in most of southern Europe; women as well as men expect pleasure from sex and participate actively. Even more important, birth control methods are accepted as normal and natural.

Even if we accept that these communities are dominated by a wider society controlled by men, the case of the Galician women tells us that it is not the eternal, let alone the natural, condition of women to be subject to men's authority and desires. Galicia is a region of Spain which considers itself to be a separate culture; and one of the outstanding traditions that Galician people are most proud of is the independence of women.

Whether they are matriarchal or not, the description of the ritual battles tells us that the domination of one sex over the other is at least strictly limited. In these battles there is a recognition of the opposed positions of women and men, but at the same time the outcome is uncertain. The women don't always win, but then again, neither do the men. □

Olivia Harris is a feminist anthropologist whose main area of research has been Spain.

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★ Manchester Gay Information urgently need women volunteers. Contact Tricia at 061 881 8692 after 7pm.

★ Part time feminist worker wanted for Brent Women's Centre. 20 hrs £30 per week. Write 138 Minet Ave, London NW10. Ring 01-965 3324 Thurs.

★ National Women's Aid Federation requires fourth worker. London based but occasional travelling involved. Some evening and weekend work. Previous worker had interest in finance and law. Previous involvement in Women's Aid and Women's liberation movement necessary. Starting date 1 July '78. Salary £3812 pending negotiations. Closing date for applications 13 May. Application form and job description available from Rosey Meehan, 13 Hawthorn Tce, Durham.

★ Islington Community Housing needs another worker to replace one of our two co-ordinators. We are a member-controlled organisation. We use short-life property and we are developing a permanent housing tenants co-operative. Office skills. Salary £3380 (under review) plus accommodation if required. Details from Islington Community Housing, 29A Hornsey Rise, London N19.

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Social scientists interested in these and related topics are invited to send a brief statement of research interests, a curriculum vitae and, if possible, an outline research proposal, including estimated costs (2000 words at most). These may be used by the Panel as a basis for inviting more detailed proposals.

Research outlines to be considered by the Panel during the Autumn need to be submitted by 31 August 1978.

Further information, including a statement of the Panel's priorities can be obtained from:

The Secretary
EOC/SSRC Joint Panel
Research Initiatives Division
Social Science Research Council
1 Temple Avenue
LONDON EC4Y 0BD
Tel: 01-353 5252 Ext 53

work offered

★ A solicitor/barrister is required to work at Balham Law Centre to specialise in housing law. Candidates must be prepared to undertake case-work, advocacy, education and work on community issues. Written details including full details of experience and interests to Tim Crick, Balham Law Centre, 92 Balham High Rd, London SW12 9AA. Closing date for applications 1 May.

work wanted

★ German woman 21 years old wants to improve her English and stay and work in London for two months from 15 May. Who has got a job with children or secretarial? Letters to Ute Heil, Woogstr 41, D-6000 Frankfurt/Main, Germany.
★ Girl 20 seeks job summer 1978. Box 702.
★ IBM typesetting by women for feminist publications. Phone Dark Moon 01-221 4331.
★ PAINTING AND DECORATING—professionally done at reasonable rates. Phone Lesley 01-359 1762.

accom offered

★ BENTHAM YORKS collective, four adults, one child aged two, living in two houses in country, need three-four adults plus one-two children. Spaces for workshops and smallholding. Letters: Dumb Toms, Ingleton via Carnforth, Lancs. Phone 0468 61461.
★ CENTRAL COPENHAGEN: sub-let double room in feminist flat. June, July, August, Discuss price. Maggie, Fruevej 34, 2860 Søborg, Copenhagen, Denmark.
★ Collective household with socialist orientation (presently all female) has space for more feminist people preferably with children. Write, phone or call 19 Rosebery Cresc, Newcastle upon Tyne 2 (0632 81115).

accom wanted

★ KAY and GUAYARMINA (six) want permanent home on farm or smallholding run by women. Experienced with livestock. Box 701. (KAY PLEASE SEND YOUR ADDRESS TO SPARE RIB).
★ Woman musician, gay, vegetarian needs room with others anywhere London. Phone Su 01-444 0411.
★ Feminist photographer seeks place in active rural household; also feminists wanting to start household. Ms H White, Flat 4, 2 Woodland Park Rd, Newport, Gwent.
★ COMMUNAL house? Feminist and son desperately need home with SENSITIVE people and kids. Share everything. Val 01-769 4858.
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★ HERB PLANTS, flower and vegetable plants, seeds. Compost barrels etc. Handmade pottery. CITY SEEDS, organic garden shop, 138 Lyham Rd, London SW2 (01-674 8851) (rear of Brixton prison). Run by women.

publications

★ THE COMING AGE: magazine of the Goddess religion. 35p. 40 St John St, Oxford.
★ DISCOVER MATRIARCHY through reincarnation memory. Other women's experiences plus do-it-yourself instructions. 75p from Silver Chalice, 40 St John St, Oxford.
★ GIAIA'S GUIDE 1978. FOR GAY WOMEN. All new, revised, updated and greatly expanded thoroughly detailed handy pocket size international lesbian bar/club guide and complete directory. This fifth edition: 35 countries/4000 listings. Centres, switchboards, bookstores/mail order houses, publications, services and much much more. £2.00 only (£2.50 overseas) from GIAIA'S GUIDE, one North End Rd, London W14 (discreet mail order only—fast delivery). Also on sale at The GATEWAYS and STERLING'S BOOKSTORES, 57 St Martin's Lane, London WC2.
★ Sappho lesbian/feminist magazine 50p including post. Basement, 20 Dorset Square, LONDON NW1. Meetings Tuesdays 7.30pm Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London W2.
★ FOR SALE Spare Rib back copies Nos 2—42. Any offers telephone Ruth: 01-385 1244 ext 3615.

conferences

★ CHRISTIAN FEMINIST conference 14-17 June. Write Fuller Seminary, Dept H, 135 N Oakland, Pasadena, California 91101, USA.

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contacts

★ Manchester lesbian not into power games seeks similar for honest relationship. Box 700.
★ Compatible people sought to form commune. Non-sexist, libertarian, pacifist bias. Non-smokers. Write Jean and David. Box 703.
★ NE SURREY/CROYDON couple expecting baby seek non-sexist people to share ideas, childcare, food co-op? Perhaps live communally later? Box 707.
★ Dechauvinated guy, late twenties, would like to meet emancipated straight/bi woman 25-35, must know how to laugh. London, N Herts pref. Box 704.
★ Girl 28 seeks female friend, Bedford area. Box 705.
★ Penfriends wanted by 20 year old German student. Renate Puchtler, Bahnhofstr 108, D-8582 Bad Berneck, Germany.
★ Intelligent man, libertarian radical, probably bisexual, is searching for a relationship with aware, understanding woman (Kent). Contact Ken Smith, Staple Farmhouse, Staple, Canterbury.
★ We are looking for communally minded people in Edinburgh interested in forming a group to purchase or rent suitable premises to share living in. Phone Chris at Edinburgh 031 669 7857 or Terri at 031 229 3117.
★ Lesbian line is a telephone counselling service for women run by women. 01-794 2942 Monday to Friday 2.00-10.00.
★ Homosexual? Lesbian? So are we. Try phoning London Friend to talk about it, any evening between 7.30 and 10pm on 01-359 7371.
★ Childless couple seeks sympathetic baby-maker. All conditions considered. Box 698.
★ ARE YOU SEEKING nationwide female contacts etc. Long standing, sincere and discreet service. Send SAE or stamp to 'Ariadne', The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.
★ Teacher planning O level women's studies course seeks support. Contact Liz Waugh, 191 Grove Rd, London E17 for outline syllabus.
★ CORNELIA BOLDYNEFF—We received your cross-word but no address. Please contact us so that we can communicate with you. Carole, Spare Rib.
★ Gay . . . Help with practical or emotional problems, or just someone to talk to . . . Fri 7-12pm and Sun 3-5pm ring 01-373 4005.

general

★ MASSAGE THERAPY Esalen, Swedish, Shaitsu, Reflexology. For healing injuries, aches and pains, promoting good health, relaxation, body/mind awareness. Kate 01-450 3038.
★ Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) tel 01-348 5593 preferably before 10am.
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groups

Note: New reduced classified ad rates for sisters looking for or starting local women's liberation groups. 5p/word; 7p/capitals; 30p box numbers.

★ STOCKPORT WOMEN'S GROUP welcomes new members. Contact SANDRA 061-442 7731.
★ I hope to move to NORTH-AMPTON soon. Can anyone give me contacts for feminist 'happenings', groups etc, there? Write Sandra Hallas, 36 Woking Close, London SW15 or phone 01-876 5142.
★ New supportive group for women wanting to return to paid work or study (LONDON N8/N10 area). Phone Sarah 01-340 3754.
★ South LONDON LESBIAN GROUP meets every Sunday at 3pm at the South London Women's Centre, 45 North St, London SW4. Details from 01-223 9289.
★ WOMEN IN DURHAM getting together to discuss our situation and do something about it here in the country. Phone Pat 0385 69744 or Laura 038882 3492.
★ AYLISHAM, NORFOLK AREA. Interested in forming women's group? Could we provide locally pregnancy tests and feminist books? Phone Cherry Pitcher 026373 3289.
★ Any Spare Rib readers or groups in WEST NORFOLK or NORTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE areas? New-comer seeks like-minded others. Phone 03668 206.
★ BARNET women's group welcomes new members. Ring Marion 01-449 8424 or Lesley 01-449 0321.
★ SALISBURY. New group starting. Contact Lyn 0980 862612.
★ ROMAN CATHOLIC feminists, unite! 01-886 0779. Box 699.
★ DONCASTER. Anyone interested in forming a women's group phone Jill Doncaster 65065.
★ Harrogate. New lesbian circle forming. Details SAE BM/Sorella London WC1V 6XX.
★ Women's Group in Colchester re-forming. Interested? Phone Lyndsay, Wivenhoe 4351.
★ LONDON (BARBICAN EC2). Any un-aligned Marxist women wanting to start a group to study, read and discuss. Box 709.

wanted

★ WANTED tape or record of KEEP YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL IF YOU WANT TO BE LOVED. Will buy or loan. Very urgent. Box 706.
★ FRANK ZAPPA: Articles, tapes or anecdotes wanted. Box 708.

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Development ~ a man's world

by Barbara Rogers

Fools rush in. I planned a two-month tour of rural development projects backed by the United Nations Development Programme in five African countries, to provide material for articles and to collect data for my thesis. My visits can best be seen as part of a process of questioning the overwhelming emphasis on men in development, which will gradually and erratically lead to attempts to redress the balance.



BARBARA ROGERS

Senior women shouted down at a 'men's meeting' in the Ivory Coast.

The difficult thing was defining the right questions. But after two or three countries it seemed that there might be some standard questions valid for almost every development planner or administrator, with variations to fit the context.

So often, these men (I say that advisedly) knew that women were important in agriculture and rural development, but had never made the connections between that and their own day-to-day work. Women at work in the fields were such a familiar sight that nobody asked any questions about what they were doing there or why, what was happening to them as a result of 'development', and how they were responding to it.

The flavour of my conversations can best be conveyed by a few random examples, from my notes.

A Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN) country representative

"I've just been filling in a questionnaire from head-

quarters about women. But you know there's hardly anything to say, because we don't have the sort of projects that would involve them. We have nothing against them, in fact we'd like to involve them more, but you see all our projects here are concerned with cattle, and it just so happens that women have very few cattle."

"Is it perhaps more than coincidence that all the money is going into cattle and almost nothing for crops, when cattle are men's responsibility and crops are the women's?"

"I never really saw it like that. But yes, of course there is a connection."

Head of planning for a World Bank project

"Meet Barbara Rogers, she's visiting this project and wants to know what we're doing for women. I warn you though, she's a feminist."

Embarrassed silence.

"Well, actually I don't

think there's anything of much interest to you here. We're a huge programme, millions of dollars, seven countries, and we don't have time for any *special projects*."

Onchocerciasis¹ Control Programme (World Health Organisation and others)

"Why do all your documents on the incidence of river-blindness only refer to men? Don't women get it? Or doesn't it matter if they get it?" A question repeated several times.

Three different replies:

"There isn't any difference. Women and men get the disease at exactly the same rate, as far as I know."

"In our village visits we find it's really a men's disease. Sure, we'll find three or four blind women in each place, but it's usually trachoma², not oncho."

"There's no common pattern. My sociological data show that it entirely depends

on the seasonal work patterns, who works close to the river for the longest periods. In some villages more women have oncho than men."

Finally:

"The documents only mention men, you say? I don't believe it. Let me see . . . Well, how amazing! You're right! I've worked on this for years, read that document dozens of times, and never noticed that it's only about men. And now I come to think of it, our film only shows pictures of men. I wonder why . . ."

Another FAO country representative, and the project manager of an irrigation scheme

"Women? Well, they're the only ones that do any work on the scheme, or in the whole area come to that. The men might be officially responsible but you won't catch them working in the sun for hours on end. Our most successful grower is a woman. The best project worker we've ever had is a woman. The pro-

ject would collapse without them."

"Well, what do the men do?"

"They drink. They sit in the shade and talk politics. Everyone knows it's the women who do everything here."

A voluntary agency's regional representative

"Are you digging wells here?"

"Well no, we've had very negative experience with this well-digging business. Everybody thinks they're so important, but we've done everything we can think of and we can't get the community to take responsibility. I've been to villages, collected all the men together, talked with them for hours. Then I come back with the equipment. We dig down until midday, and there's some water in the hole. I can't get them to understand that they've got to keep digging, otherwise the well will dry up as soon as the dry season starts. They just refuse to dig any deeper, and of course their wells dry up and they come and ask for more help. I'm fed up with wells."

"But why were you only talking to the men in the first place? They're not the ones who go to the well every day, year in and year out, and who actually observe the level going up and down according to the seasons..."

Pause.

"I didn't think of that then. That was before I started to become enlightened about that sort of thing."

Director of a co-operative employment project

"I've tried to introduce vegetable production here, too. I got this man to try it, spent hours with him suggesting new techniques, working with him, persuading him to experiment with different methods. Yes, it looks very impressive, and he gets a good income from it. But I'm very disappointed that it hasn't been taken up by anyone else in the village, which was the original idea."

"Didn't any of the women show any interest?"

Another of those long silences. This time I thought I'd really offended him. He finally replied, very slowly.

"Perhaps if I'd tried it with the women in the first place the idea would have got a lot further by now. You know, I

just never thought of that."

It was exhausting dealing with all these men. My immediate reaction to these scenes was to seek out other women who could throw some light on it from a more thoughtful perspective, whether in the UN, project offices, or in the villages themselves.

Most women in the UN field offices were secretaries. They gave me coffee, advice, sometimes whispered encouragement. While the men were out of the room I would get comments like, "I hope you keep doing what you're doing here. The men think they own us in this office." Many of these women are unable to see much of what is happening in the field, and few bosses bother to explain to them what is going on. They feel intimidated by their bosses, and are anxious not to step out of their prescribed role; in many cases, they have no alternative employment prospects outside the UN.

One of them left soon after I did, despite pleas from local staff and project managers alike to stay. But as the most junior professional in the office, and a woman at that, she had been a natural target for her Resident Representative. She explained:

"He can't relate to women as professionals—only as sex objects (literally). If he wants women to work for him he's going to have to learn to behave like a human being. I don't have to put up with his hostility, now that things are opening up for women back home."

Then there were the village women, the only ones who really counted in the end. I was handicapped by the impossibility of spending any length of time with them, by not speaking a word of their language, of coming from such a different background. In many cases, I might arrive in a village without knowing anything about it or the people who lived there. Echoing in my ears was the favourite jibe of men in development studies: "Of course, western women's lib is completely irrelevant to Third World women."

A 'Cook's tour' like mine is hardly the ideal way of testing this assumption about the supposed gulf between women. However, I found it amazingly easy to exchange basic ideas with village women despite the unfamiliarity, language barriers and un-

certainities of translation through men. In some cases the contact was very direct—like when the leader of one of the women's groups in a Zambian village seized on my brief visit and urged me to: "Tell the big men, if you see them, we need help. We've worked hard to raise our own funds: brewing, cooking, sewing—but it's not enough for what we need to do. Tell those men it's time they give us some help for a change." In Botswana, I was met with a very similar appeal from the leaders of the Botswana Council of Women, which has some 300 village-level groups. They were in despair about the prospects of international assistance of any kind, and disgusted at the superior attitudes of the men controlling voluntary agency funds which could have been of great help to them.

In the Ivory Coast, I was faced without warning with formal village meetings, which demonstrated vividly the problems of generalising about 'Third World Women' as if they were an undifferentiated mass. In the first village, my hosts from the co-operative organisation and I had the greatest difficulty persuading any of the women to say anything in front of the men. When the most senior women started to answer questions and began to show a little more confidence, a man jumped up and denounced them violently for presuming to speak in a men's meeting. The rest of the session was spent in wrangling among the men about rank and precedence. Discouraged by the experience, I approached the second village with trepidation. It was only three miles away, and the people were from exactly the same group. Yet here the women, particu-

larly those active in their branch of the official women's organisation, were happy to discuss almost anything under the sun, while their men sat and listened.

They were curious about how women lived in my part of the world. I explained that isolation and loneliness were great problems, with the women tied to their children and houses and with their husbands away most of the time leading completely separate lives. I expected sympathetic commiseration. Instead, they told me they would love to exchange their lives for what I had described, and get their husbands off their backs and out of their way all day... The problem was that the brief moment of shared interests, jokes and feelings was always being broken off as I left for the next place. I felt continually that a little more time, and a smattering of the local language, would have produced some very interesting exchanges, and I left confident about the possibility of communication between women coming from opposite sides of the world.

With all its limitations, this tour exceeded my expectations in terms of new perspectives about women in Africa, and demonstrated also that future attempts at evaluation could be more productive, especially as the process of questioning male bias in development continues to evolve. □

1 *Onchocerciasis*: disease caused by filarial worms. It's transmitted by biting flies that carry the worm, which gets into the skin tissue of humans. If the eyes get infected it can lead to blindness.

2 *Trachoma*: a chronic contagious conjunctivitis.

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T & CLEVELAND

PART 2

The land of Andy Capp, where men are men and women are glad of it! That's how the North East is known throughout the country—men sweating out their days in heavy industry, not letting on what they earn to their wives. The Select Committee on Violence in Marriage was told by the Council of Social Services that wife-battering was practically the local sport (a view contradicted by Willie Hamilton, a 'local lad'). It's also the land of the Jarrow March and 'When the boat comes in'.

That's the stereotype. The reality is an area with outstandingly beautiful countryside and lively towns where 'community spirit' is still strong. Women in the North East are hard working, realistic—under no illusions about the myth that women are liberated today. They work in part-time, poorly-paid jobs and do most of the work at home as well. For many there is the added problem of an unemployed man around the house who is 'suffering from a role identity crisis' as a 'failed breadwinner', but spends more time in the pub than in the kitchen.

So our campaigns here have to reach out to the real problems in women's lives—doing two jobs, abortion and contraception, child care facilities, caring for dependent relatives, alcoholism, and social mobility splitting up families.

Anna

COAST WOMEN'S GROUP

The Coast Women's Group was formed in 1974 when some members broke away from Newcastle Socialist Women's Action Group to spend more time on discussions of feminist politics and to become a woman-only group. The group met at the coast in North Tyneside (the metropolitan borough to the East of Newcastle) but at that time drew its members from all over the area north of the Tyne. The first two years of the group saw a great deal of groundwork in discussion and consciousness-raising and we held a conference on the politics of childcare in the WLM, especially at conferences. We still feel that the importance of creches as a positive experience for mothers and children has not yet been established in the WLM.

With the emergence of the Working Women's Charter and other campaigns, the group developed an identity as a socialist feminist group, and members 'took off' into a variety of activities (with women) which they felt suited their individual interests. We see it as strategic to be involved in situations which attract women who wouldn't necessarily join a WL group, and to make openings for informal consciousness-raising whenever we see them. Thus our Wednesday night meetings have taken on the form of a 'breathing-space' and a place to discuss problems and perspectives raised by these activities. The group now has a nucleus of nine who are all

mothers with children but we always welcome new members. Our Wednesday nights are a vital part of our lives!

NORTH TYNESIDE WOMEN'S AID

It is frustrating to try to be a Women's Aid group in the only area that has a Local Authority run battered wives 'unit'. We were involved in the initial propaganda over the need for a hostel, and in negotiations with Local Authority officials over the function and financing of the hostel. To our surprise, the local authority decided to go ahead themselves and set up and run a 'unit' for six families under a management team—a sub-committee of the local authority social services committee. Difficulties arose almost immediately when the councillor, a woman, who was the chief supporter of the hostel turned against the 'type of women' who were coming to the hostel. Vicious statements about the morals of the women, the vandalism of the children, etc, were made in public and in the press. So our role has been that of propagandist and defender of the women in the hostel, and latterly, fighting the closure of it. The 'unit' will leave the present premises in March and move to two new houses (with still only six women), under the Housing Department and with a shared social worker. Our lack of resources, both in woman power, time and finances, and the strained local political

IN

situation, mean that we cannot set up alternative premises, although we would like to.

Stop press from Anna; 'North Tyneside Council have closed their battered wives 'unit', so we are taking immediate steps to bring Women's Aid back to life and look for a house/houses.'

CLEVELAND WOMEN'S ACTION GROUP

Women in Cleveland have now been running a Women's Action Group for about two years, with a membership of approximately 20. The group meets on the first Wednesday of every month in the University of Leeds Centre, Harrow Road Middlesbrough, at 8pm, and acts as a co-ordinator for several other groups in the area, such as a general women's discussion group, a socialist feminist discussion group, the local branch of the National Abortion Campaign, Teesside Polytechnic's Women's Action Group, and so on.

Several members are involved through their work and through voluntary help with Middlesbrough's hostel for battered wives, for which there are sometimes fund-raising drives in the form of jumble sales etc. There have also been fund-raising efforts including socials and the ever faithful jumble sales to swell WAG funds and also in aid of NAC both nationally and locally.

Some women from the group have recently attended a series of lectures on Women in Society given by a group member who is a lecturer for the Open University, and several women from the group are now embarking on a series of lectures on counselling techniques, with a view to eventually setting up an independent counselling service, run by women for women, on abortion, rape and so on.

In the recent past, women from the group have organised two Gestalt weekends, with places reserved for sisters from the Newcastle area. A member of the Cleveland WAG who is a psychologist by profession has offered to run a ten-week series of gestalt/encounter-type sessions, each to be of two hours' duration, starting at Easter, provided that there are enough people interested.

Group members are now trying to get a quarterly newsletter off the ground (which is, as yet, unnamed) which will act as a diary of local and regional events of interest, and also as a forum for anyone with something to say—anything from poetry to protests!

THE



North Shields has been symbolised by a working woman since 1781. This is a photo of Dolly No 4, which was placed on the Fish Quay in 1902—the originals had been ships' figureheads and had been destroyed over the years by sailors chipping pieces off 'for luck'. The one above was carved by 'Miss Spence'.

SHIELDS WOMEN'S GROUP

This is one of the most useful things to come out of the now defunct Working Women's Charter Campaign. Depending on time and resources, we produce a four-sided sheet of local and women's issues, treated seriously yet conversationally, with cartoons and information about meetings, and sell it around local housing estates and in other groups we're involved in.

NORTH TYNESIDE NURSERY CAMPAIGN

Two years ago we conducted a survey in the North Tyneside Area to find out women's views on nurseries. Most women were eager to have their children in nurseries mainly because they thought the area was so awful, with no amenities for children. We presented our report, based on the survey, to the Council and to the press. We have also had a play about nurseries, Double Shift, to which we invited people involved with pre-school provision. Although we have generated plenty of discussions and support for our aims, we have been disappointed that many people have not been prepared to commit themselves to the campaign. So far we have failed to



produce any concrete results from the Council, but we feel we have succeeded in making the Education Committee feel uneasy about the lack of nursery provision.

STOP PRESS . . . they are opening ten new nursery classes next year, but we still have to convince them of the need for day nurseries.

SCARLET WOMEN COLLECTIVE

This started after the Newcastle WLM conference, to publish the 'newsletter of the Socialist Feminist current in the WLM'. It is now a collective of six and we have published five issues, the last one, with a print run of 500, circulated in Britain and overseas. Scarlet Women also keeps the regional network of Socialist Feminists in touch through regional meetings and regional co-ordinators. The collective publishes papers, articles and letters on all issues which socialist-feminists are interested in. PS We are looking for cartoonist/illustrators.

The article in Tyneside Part 1 (SR 68) entitled 'Socialist Feminists' was meant to be about the Socialist Centre and what the socialist feminists involved in it feel about this Centre. It was not meant to cover all the activities of socialist feminists in Newcastle or to imply that all socialist feminists are involved in the Centre.

RAFT

A member of the Coastal Women's Group, Anna Briggs, has founded 'RAFT', a group where relatives and friends caring for dependent—sick, frail, disabled—people at home can come together as a self-help group for mutual support and to organise pressure group activities. This issue is becoming even more important for women than childcare, as the length of life increases, and the situation in which women (usually) caring for their relatives find themselves is often infinitely worse than childcare. Politicians plan for 'community care' without providing the resources to adequately support the people who are doing this job. Married women, who form the majority of this group, are alone in not qualifying for the new invalid Care Allowance.

Anna has recently been awarded a two-year grant by the Equal Opportunities Commission, to study the circumstances of people caring for dependent relatives at

home. The study will examine housing, finance, employment mobility etc, as well as seeing how effective the support provided by the Health and Social Services Departments is.

NORTH TYNESIDE SINGLE PARENT FAMILY GROUP

Two members of the Coastal Women's Group started this group in Whitley Bay about a year ago. Single parents share the problem of shortage of income, difficulties of accommodation, feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and despair, as they struggle to provide for their children practically and emotionally. In a self-help group problems can be discussed, practical support can be given and children can enjoy parties, excursions to the pantomime and adventure weekends together. There are now two more groups meeting in North Tyneside, at Wallsend and North Shields.

GESTALT THERAPY

Tyneside and Cleveland women have organised two feminist Gestalt therapy weekends with Anna Farrow, who had a workshop at the last WLM conference. Feelings are mixed about the results, some feel they have definitely benefited while others would like to relate therapy much more to 'personal is political' principles, and develop leaderless therapy techniques in women's groups themselves. The weekends certainly gave a lot of power to the people who went.

TYNESIDE WOMEN'S VOICE

Women's Voice is a group of socialist women, members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party, who try to involve women in revolutionary politics by campaigning on issues affecting women's lives. In addition to selling 'Women's Voice' around housing estates, hospitals and shopping areas, the members are active in the Willington Quay Hospital Action Group and the Tyneside Abortion Campaign. Activities have included street meetings on prices, abortion and health service cuts, and public meetings on rape and wife-battering. During the firemen's strike we made contact with a number of the wives involved and organised a Christmas party for their kids.

If you want to write about activities in your city, town or area please contact Barbara Charles, Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.



WILLINGTON QUAY HOSPITAL ACTION GROUP

This group has successfully opposed the closure of a local maternity home, with the wholesale support of the local people. The Area Health Authority said that the 24,000 signature petition did not influence their decision! This is an area where home births are very strongly discouraged and the consultant unit, with its growing intervention in birth, is the only alternative. The Coastal Women's Group are also active in this group.

THE LABOUR PARTY

Yes, there are still a few of us working in the Labour Party. This area has a Tory MP but a Labour controlled Local Authority. A lot of Local Authority decisions and spheres of influence affect women and children. We use the Labour Party as a platform for initiating action and debate on topics that would otherwise not be touched—abortion, wife battering, nurseries, sex discrimination in schools, racism and fascism—as well as bringing a different aspect to issues like planning and housing. Through the Labour Party we can make contact with people on their door steps and learn of the things which they have to suffer. We feed this back into our other groups—single parents, nursery campaign and various support groups. The other advantages are that we now have two representatives on the Community Health Council which gives us another platform for women and children's health issues, and four others on school governors' bodies—the Director of Education has been reported to the Equal Opportunities Commission for some of his guidelines to schools on girls and boys' education. It's not easy to face the barrage of male chauvinism at party meetings, but we gain in strength, both in terms of numbers and ability to stand up and put our point of view and win the argument. Somehow we find this more satisfying than having futile intellectual arguments with so-called non-sexist left men!

WOMEN'S SOCIAL & SPORTS CLUB

Some of us are involved in working as 'volunteers' with Probation Officers in running a club for their 'clients' and 'clients' wives'. We meet twice a week for social activities and badminton, which the group members requested. We have had outings for women and children and for women only to a nightclub. At the Christmas party the members performed a Mummers Play, which we have since put on in two local hospitals. For some of the women who come for a chat and a cuppa, it's one of the few breaks away from their blokes. We all benefit from discussions about the problems we face as women.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Coast Women's Group: Claudia, 14 Beverley Terrace, Cullercoats, Tyne & Wear (0632 522939)
Cleveland Women's Action Group: Kay, 19 Shaw Crescent, Grange-town, Middlesbrough, Cleveland.
Socialist Feminist discussion group—meets every month with ten members; it's a group where members explore and develop their own ideas as socialists and feminists on, for example, the family, violence against women, pornography.
Contact: Liz, 28 Parliament Road, Middlesbrough (0642 242685).
Scarlet Women Collective: Penny, 5 Washington Terrace, North Shields, Tyne & Wear.
North Tyneside Women's Aid and 'RAFT' (Relatives and Friends Together): Anna, 12 Frank Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear (089 45 81745)
Women's Voice Group: Kathy, 19 Lambley Avenue, Marden Estate, North Shields, Tyne & Wear (089 45 72401).
Nursery Campaign: Kate, 9 The Avenue, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear.
Willington Quay Hospital Action Group: Annie, 9a Bath Terrace, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear.
Single Parent Families Groups: Jill, 54 Valley Gardens, Monks-eaton, Tyne & Wear (0632 523336)
Shields Women Group: Irene, 38 Deepdale Road, Marden Estate, North Shields, Tyne & Wear (089 45 79767)
Gestalt Weekend: Anna (see above) or Uta (0632 81185)
Socialist Feminist discussion group will meet every other Monday from 10 April. It is based on a minimum definition of socialist feminism as a distinct current and hopes to develop theory and action: Contact Anna (089 45 81745)

reviews



The Innocent—seductive beauty of a crumbling world.

film

THE INNOCENT

Directed by Luchino Visconti

Maybe I went to the film like a vulture, with hopes of seeing a man's self-deception and moment of truth when he discovers that like himself, his wife has a lover. In fact the melodramatic plot initially leads you to follow this line, though I half suspected Visconti's motives.

Guests from Roman society at the turn of the century sit listening to a woman singing in a Royal salon—a scene of blatant opulence. Giuliana and Tullio, wife and husband, arrive late. Tullio's eyes slide over to his lover, the widow Theresa. He leaves his wife on a pretence and joins Theresa.

Later that evening Tullio confesses his desperate love for Theresa to his wife. And leaving Giuliana in the care of his brother, he goes after her. Giuliana is tortured by her position and takes a sleeping potion. Her brother-in-law's friend, the newly famous writer D'Arborio, feels drawn to her in her open suffering. On Tullio's return she is happy and self-contained, seemingly in love, having an affair, the details of which she keeps to herself.

The rest of the film revolves around the interaction between Tullio and Giuliana; the balance of power. Tullio is com-

pulsively drawn to what he cannot have, and is totally undermined when Giuliana is pregnant—affirming and giving evidence to her love for D'Arborio. He tries to con her into having an abortion, but she seems determined to preserve her love and her child: at one point she declares that she is ready to leave him and will give the expected child her name. In the end though, she sells herself to him and remains, hoping that he will protect the child. Why she succumbs remains unexplained, as if it were part of the historical restrictions of a natural condition.

Instead Visconti enshrouds her in secret, mystery, and purity. Tullio refers to "the amazing faculty women have of adapting reality" and says that she lives her life as a "romantic novel". How could she not, when that is exactly what this film is? Tullio is pathetic in the end—a man desperate to keep the power of life and death in his own hands, but ultimately confused and unable to risk changes.

The complications made me realise that Visconti uses 'the battle of the sexes' as a scenario within his view of the world of men and 'important' issues: power, honour, reputation, and judgement over life and death. Although he may have been trying to explore the pessimism, destruction, and futility of the patriarchal world, I found Visconti's love-hate relationship

with power cold and disturbing. But I guess his elimination of identification or emotional sympathy with any of the characters seemed his way of confronting the seductive beauty of that crumbling world.

As we are made to be non-involved the consequences are presented for us to judge. I felt let down—the conclusions were already obvious in my mind irrespective of the film's intent. We see mostly through Tullio's eyes—it's his expectations, his fears, his insecurities we are shown. The alternatives from a female experience were only barely touched upon. The two women are too often portrayed as the abandoned wife, hurt, mysterious and suffering, and the 'free', capricious widow who is trapped by her knowledge of the ways of the world. Visconti seems to exploit the rising independence of women by having them occasionally utter strong words, but never enabling or allowing them to put them into practice.

Naomi Deutscher

'1900'

Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci

In Italian 'Novocento' means both '1900' and 'the twentieth century'. Bernardo Bertolucci's latest film, a four-hour epic reluctantly cut back from a six-hour original, employs both meanings: on a frankly operat-

ic, fairy-tale summer day in 1900 two boys are born on the same Po Valley estate. One is the grandson of the *padrone*, the landowner; the other a child of the large peasant clan who work his estate. They become friends...

To Bertolucci their lifelong affinity and conflict is an enactment of the century's major struggle: the dialectic between a declining bourgeoisie and a rising proletariat. Bertolucci's allegory, however, is hardly adequate to its task, confining as it does the story of masses in conflict to two protagonists, and male protagonists at that.

Neither problem is incidental to this director's aesthetic: since his rejection of the avant-garde at the end of the sixties, Bertolucci has sought a more 'popular' style of film-making while maintaining his fascination with masculine identity, Oedipal conflicts between father and son, and homosexuality. (The affair in 'Last Tango', it has been observed, with its anal sex, butter lubricants, clandestinity and peculiar sadomasochism, makes more sense as an observation of repressed male homosexuality.)

In '1900' these preoccupations resurface to totally swamp the frail vessel of the film's ostensible narrative. The result is perhaps the most phallic film of all time, in which the spectre haunting Europe turns out to be... the potent proletarian! As the peasant boy precedes his aristocratic chum into puberty, so the landowner realises he can't get it up any more and commits suicide—just as his bourgeois grandson will, in the film's present-day epilogue, lie down in the path of... a speeding locomotive!

Bertolucci ascribes '1900's' use of popular styles (notably the western) to a sort of celluloid 'historic compromise'—coming to terms with traditional idioms in order to convey a revolutionary message. He confesses himself surprised at the film's rejection by its American distributors and so am I. Armed insurrection is specifically ruled out in its ghastly travesty of the disarming of the partisans in 1945, and anyway, it suggests, the doomed ruling class will eventually relinquish their power voluntarily. Meanwhile, patriarchal power is not only not challenged, it's positively celebrated.

'1900' may wave a few red flags, but there is little in its dialectic of the butch and bourgeois that one could conceivably call 'revolutionary'.

Mandy Merck

reviews

JONAH WHO WILL BE 25 IN THE YEAR 2000

Directed by Alain Tanner

I am easily charmed by whimsical speeches delivered in French by proletarians to bemused scruffy intellectuals against stylish backdrops of whitewashed farm walls, and tickled to hear that pink islands of shrimps are erupting in our oceans because whales are being slaughtered for lipstick, and since whales feed on shrimps no whales equals a glut of shrimps therefore soon we'll be forced to eat shrimp three times a day . . . Which is to say that Berger and Tanner have a very light touch, and sometimes I get suspicious of it.

But it's good to see even an oblique exploration of some of the different strands of idealistic-radical thought which have erupted since the late 60's. Ecology, wholefoods, libertarian ideas of self-management and control of one's life now, the Zen kick, and free-schooling, all rattle around in this film, and their relation to economic class struggle is debated. The conclusion being that it's all necessary, but only organised class struggle can bring change and can sustain individual fantasies, hopes and utopian experiments and stop them spiralling off into self-destruct or isolation.

Each character is a kind of outpost of dissidence in hyper-capitalist Switzerland, from Marie the supermarket cashier who determinedly undercharges her customers, to Madeleine the secretary who preaches the primacy of transcending false Western dualisms like male/female, mind/body. ("Exploiter and exploited, worker and boss, o yeah?" retorts Mathieu, the redundant worker.) Then there's Max, lugubrious ex-

activist upon whose heart May '68 is carved, who prophesies mainly the coming of barbarism and fascism. There are Marcel and Marguerite, market-gardeners and ecological-balance freaks, alternately dotty and businesslike. And Marco, the subversive historian who expounds delightfully on the philosophy and politics of time and brings Mathieu in to his classroom to lecture on recession, and Marie to tell of alienated days in the life of a shop worker.

In various improbable ways the characters link up and establish a temporary oasis for themselves on the Whole Earth farm. Before the reality principle encroaches on each of them in different guises, their fantasies have a little space to flower. Mathieu the militant sets up a short-lived free school, but when obstructed by Marguerite's 'realism', he doesn't opt for disillusionment but carries his visions back into daily wage-slavery and struggle. And, by implication, he carries the hopes and dreams of the others too.

However, Mathilde, his wife, is shown as a woman whose only longing is to leave factory work and have more babies "to fill her emptiness". She is the whale in whose belly Jonah—the future—is nurtured. This stereotyping was particularly dreary and embarrassing in a film which elsewhere attempts to tackle radical ideas and possibilities. In fact Berger and Tanner seem generally at sea with their female characters, which leads them into all sorts of doldrums, mystifications and annoyances. I mean, how can they have missed the fact that women's liberation also exploded in the late 60's? Anyway, feminist consciousness features

nowhere in the galaxy of dreams and rebellions of their characters, and the more I think about it, the more the oversight grates. I begin to forget the noble things about the film, and the quicksilver wit, and just get evil-tempered about the yards of virtuoso verbalising the male writers have packed into this box of tricks.

Alison Fell

books

THE AWAKENING

by Kate Chopin

(The Women's Press £1.00)

When Kate Chopin's novel was first published in 1899 it provoked a barrage of shock and outrage. The author did not recover; she ceased writing novels. It is only recently that her work has begun to receive the attention it deserves. The climate for women, and for women novelists, has not changed all that much, and Kate Chopin's work is still relevant to women today. Her heroine, Edna Pontellier, is a wife and mother, moving in the luxurious but stultifying social world of New Orleans and Grand Isle, the fashionable holiday resort for the leisured white upper classes.

It is in Grand Isle that Edna experiences the stirrings of her awakening, when she falls in love with a young man and starts to realise through this relationship how much the need to live up to the image of dutiful wife and mother has constrained her. She begins to wish for privacy, for self-fulfilment, for sexual joy, to work as a painter. Her inner strivings and turmoil are expressed through the image of the sea, powerful and dominant in the book. She learns to swim, to float, to lose herself in the sea, at the start of the novel; and it is to the sea that she returns at the end of the book in order to resolve the conflicts that have opened up for her once she has admitted that passion need not necessarily co-exist with either romantic or marital love.

The careful introduction by Helen Taylor posits that this is a feminist work. Indeed it is; it is also a simple and very moving love story in the tragic style. Kate Chopin's achievement is to blend the two through her feel for landscape, texture, and the details of everyday life. This is a novel deserving of a wide audience.

Michele Roberts

LITTLE SISTERS

by Fay Weldon

(Hodder & Stoughton £4.25)

Fay Weldon's new novel is disturbing. Inside a complex, macabre and surrealist plot there are all her old feminist insights on how women are oppressed by the men in their lives. The rejected wife finds she quite enjoys living without her meticulous and critical husband: "I don't want your vision of me anymore. I don't want to resist your disapproval, struggling for my pride in the face of your contempt . . . I am tired of explaining to Wendy that you don't mean to hurt, you just can't help it."

The widowed dentist's wife comes to life after her lecherous husband's death, taking over his practice, forming a happy lesbian relationship.

But I'm not sure if there's any real sisterhood in *Little Sisters*. When the older sister, Gemma, says, "Well girl-friends must fall when boy-friends push. That's one of the laws of nature", I do think Weldon believes this. Not just as a fact of our lives now, but literally.

The little sisters in the novel are two young typists who, at different times, in different ways, jump away from their grey and boring futures towards love, wealth and power. Well, Gemma, the elder, has made the jump, married a millionaire, and been mentally and physically crippled on the way. Elsa is stopped by Gemma in mid-leap, or as her businessman lover believes, on the first rung of the ladder to her brighter future. She's still very young, unconfident and helpless; he middle-aged, self-assured and powerful. Has Elsa been saved by Gemma from mental and physical damage by her flight back to her working-class family?

It's not clear. Weldon's pessimism, almost fatalism, is too baffling for me to be sure. Earlier she has described Elsa's attraction to the ageing businessman as inevitable. "... it is the desire of the helpless for the powerful, the poor for the rich, the weak for the strong, and it has its roots in her womb, and from it, one might well believe, grows the whole structure of human society."

The millionaire believes: "Life itself is a prison. I long for the end of it." Weldon does see that women are more trapped than men inside this 'prison', but does she see any way out, or is she trapped inside some conservative ideology?

Lynne Segal



Jonah—a box of tricks?

reviews



Fire! Fire! said Mrs Dyer;
Where? where? said Mrs Dare;
Up the town, said Mrs Brown;

Any damage? said Mrs Gamage;
None at all, said Mrs Hall.

compendium

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theatre

IN OUR WAY

The Women's Theatre Group

The Women's Theatre Group's latest play with music looks at women on both sides of the shop floor, to discover how far the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts have affected women. On one side are the shop floor workers, some full, some part-time, but all sectioned off into an area where

reviews

kids' books

MOTHER GOOSE COMES TO CABLE STREET

Collected by Rosemary Stones and Andrew Mann of the CRW

Illustrated by Dan Jones (Kestrel £2.25)

The *Children's Rights Workshop* has pioneered and developed much of the debate about bias in children's books and this book demonstrates just what authors, illustrators, editors and publishers could do. It is a collection of 20 rhymes, some well known—*Girls and boys come out to play*—some less familiar—*One misty, moisty morning*, but all of which take on added meaning through Dan Jones's vivid illustrations which un-

selfconsciously reflect multi-cultural, working-class London, show men and women in unstereotyped roles, and are packed with detail which kids and adults alike will pore over. Don't miss the endpapers with their street-name rhymes. Highly recommended for all ages.

John Vincent

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A number of *SR* readers have complained over the years about the high cost of hardback children's books and the general difficulties in getting hold of the non-sexist books we review.

For us, however, there's no alternative but to write about important new hardbacks and at the same time to mention regularly good non-sexist books that have come into paperback. The hardback titles can always be requested at your local library if not in stock and most bookshops will order books they don't keep.

The following three books, at last available in paperback, were all reviewed in *SR* when

they first came out and they are, I think, the most important non-sexist children's novels for ten-year-olds and upwards of recent years.

That Crazy April by American Lila Perl (Lions 60p) is a funny, punchily written novel about a girl who resents her mother being a women's movement activist until she realises that as a girl she is always getting the thin edge of the stick.

Another fine novel from an American writer, *Nobody's Family is Going to Change* by Louise Fitzhugh (Lions 60p) chronicles black middle-class Emma's attempts to convince her family that she really is going to be a lawyer when she grows up, and not just marry one and raise "two lovely children".

Almost the only children's novel to show the pressures on boys to be 'manly', *Going Back* by Penelope Lively (Piccolo 60p) is a sensitive portrait of a boy growing up, as much a prey to emotions and fears as his sister.

Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop

equal pay cannot be an issue since there are no men to be equal to. On the other side is the woman manager, the woman in the 'top job', complete with confidence and au pair. The two main theatrical spurs in the play are firstly, when a woman journalist comes to do an article on successful women, and secondly, when a young woman worker applies for an apprenticeship scheme of which normally only men take advantage.

The play presents a clear through-line of argument; women are seen to be more divided along class lines than they are united across sex lines; the manageress has no sympathy for the difficulty of a working-class mother—the demands of industrial production must come first. The songs punctuate wittily, and there is a moment of quite remarkable theatrical intensity when an aptitude test is set to music. But although the line of argument is clear, the structure of the piece is somewhat laboured. Middle- and working-class women are divided on the stage, and where the working-class women's humour and experience is vivid and funny, the middle-class pair are mainly vehicles for the play's ideas, and never establish a viable relationship. It doesn't in any way invalidate the play as a clear and

cautionary statement on the limitations of anti-discrimination; and the end is sufficiently surprising to provoke thought about how legislation and attitudes can be

challenged and improved.

Micheline Wandor

The Women's Theatre Group
c/ 27 Stepney Green
London E1
01 278 6783



Women on the shop floor

music

THE KICK INSIDE (EMI)

Kate Bush

Drifting out of windows for the past month or so, the strange sound of Kate Bush's *Wuthering Heights*... sufficiently different from yer average pop single to merit a second ear. Then after the initial "Whaattt?" the irritatingly compelling chorus 'Heathcliff, it's me, Cathy come home' sticks in the brain, they are sounds not words. Now the album, also A HIT. And a surprise—the woman of the child's voice and passive image doesn't churn out the dependent-woman songs. She controls her own fates, with a couple of nods towards the 'Strange Phenomena' that perhaps set outlines.

She writes of love and lust, the awareness of 'Room for a life in your womb' that gives women a different perspective on eternity. 'Moving', inspired by Lindsey Kemp is on dance and mime, an art she has practised. There are references to Essential Contradictions, security vs freedom, best allegorised on 'Kite'.

The music isn't so hot, most of the tunes are pretty forgettable. Back-up is adequate to pedestrian with a strong contender for the world's most boring guitar solo fading out of *Wuthering Heights*. (Prizes to Ian Bairnson.) But her voice is what is getting the attention. A forty minute album is a bit much to take in but there are some tracks where the strange high-pitched vocals are just right; the Linda Lewis/Minnie Ripperton technique, though at a less developed level. A passing thought—could this child/woman style be what was so attractive to the male power structure that creates air play and chart success?

Pam Isherwood

ABBA—The Album

(EPC 86052)

ABBA—The Movie

(general release)

and now...

ABBA—The Review

The main focus of *Abba—The Movie* is Agnetha Falckog's bum, billed as "the sexiest bottom in the world". Usually covered in tight white trousers, it wriggles and sways in the centre of the screen.

The film's slight story-line (the worst thing in it) is of a radio journalist battling for an

reviews



"They're the newly-weds next door—yet they're gods and goddesses." [Benny Anderson living with (ooh!) Anni-frid Lyngstad, Agnetha Falskog married to Bjorn Ulvaeus—makes up ABBA, geddit?]

interview with Abba as they zap round Australia—he runs behind them from airport to auditorium, falling back on asking folks in the streets what they think of the four Swedish superstars. "I like the cleancut beat," they say, "the cleancut appearance"; "I think they're nice and clean, they're always dressed nicely, clean and tidy." So the image is built up of a nice family show—"Sometimes two or even three generations go together, a family."

Certainly they're well-scrubbed—Benny's beard, neatly clipped as it is, looks almost scruffy in the context—but this "clean" thing is ambiguous. Agnetha's bottom may be enclosed (tightly) and owned by husband Bjorn who's right by her on stage, but as a taxidriver points out, blowing their cover near the end, he'd be embarrassed taking the wife and kiddies—the blonde girl's exposing herself.

The contradiction isn't that great—after all, family life is founded on sexual repression—but in Abba it bubbles oddly near the surface and in the movie you can't tell who's kidding who about 'good clean fun'. It's *Forum*-style sex, lots of it and nothing-is-wrong-if-you're-into-it, expressed through romantic lyrics and corny stage gestures, like semaphore.

They're ambiguous too about money. Their smash hit (all their singles are smash hits) 'Money, Money, Money' is almost self-parody, delivered across speedy shots of fans

consuming Abba trinkets—*'All the things I could do if I had a lot of money it's a rich man's world . . .'*

They've certainly made a lot of money—their estimate is 11.6 million dollars a year—and they talk about it a lot. They dumped their native language pretty quick for international stardom, but they haven't left their native land. Indeed they're proud to pay tax, they like Sweden's 'socialist thinking', they represent such *democratic* capitalism.

Benny approves of the Scandinavian attitude "that nobody is better than anybody else, whatever he or she is doing". They're the newly-weds next door—yet they're gods and goddesses. The whole film plays on this contradiction—they're such nice approachable people, but the journalist can't get near them. In one ecstatic fantasy he slaps Benny and Bjorn on the back in the pub—the Tetley's Brew XI ad—then wafts through fields with Agnetha and Frida—the Sunsilk ad—or sits while they reach beseechingly up his legs. And finally, quite by chance in a hotel lift, he gets the intimate group interview his boss has been bullying him for, but the joke is that we never hear it. Presumably they had nothing to say. Instead we see Frida shot from below—the photographer on his knees before her?—hair lifted in a plastic breeze as she sings the plastic symphony 'Eagles' in a lift that looks suspiciously like a coffin.

The most sinister scene is

when the two women dress and make up to look exactly identical—blonde wigs, white swimsuits, gold boots. Indistinguishable from their backing vocalists, they jerk into 'I'm a Marionette'—

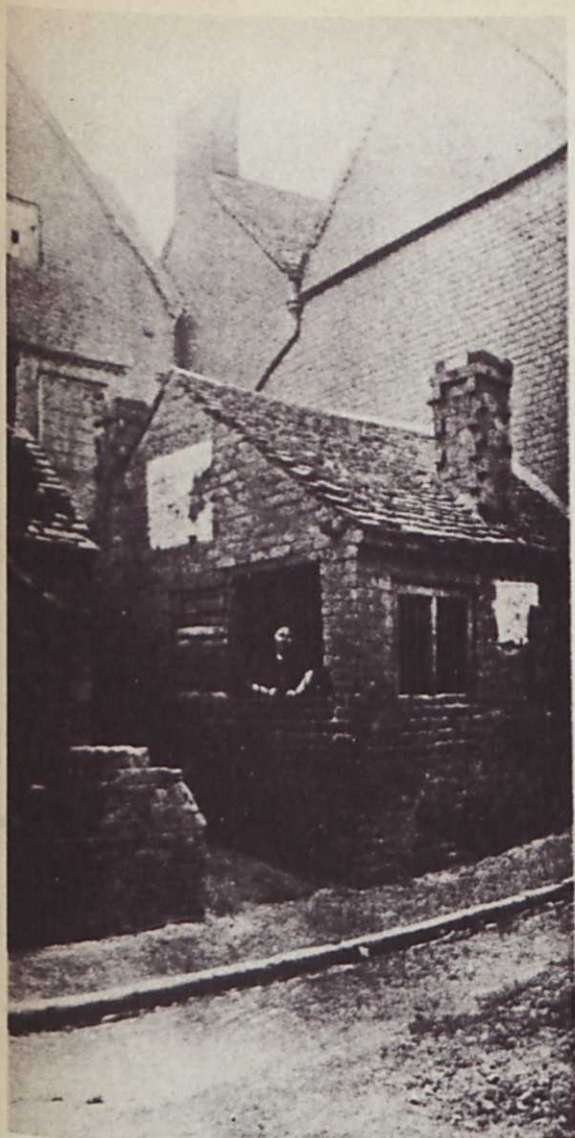
' . . . I'm like a doll like a puppet with no will at all and somebody taught me how to talk

how to walk, how to fall . . .' For a moment it's as if Sandy Shaw were singing 'Puppet on a String' with awareness that that's just how women are expected to present themselves—conformist, malleable, interchangeable.

Of course Abba are not consciously saying anything so subtle. "A baby can say Abba" they boast, a five year old girl can fall in love with Bjorn. Slick, skilled, hypnotic, their greatest hits—'Take a Chance On Me', 'Dancing Queen', 'Knowing Me Knowing You'—may be superficial but they're compulsive. Abba have great jukebox appeal, and though whole albums get a bit sickly, *Arrival* and side one at least of *Abba—The Album* are well worth a listen.

Jill Nicholls

tv



Chain Making in the Cradley Heath district

"The women's work is done almost entirely in domestic workshops . . . As one looks in the shop lit up with the glare of the fire and hot irons and sees the women bare-armed, bare-chested, perspiring and working with feverish eagerness, the vision suggests the nether regions, and the shock to the visitor is almost overpowering. There has been a trades union for women since 1886, but it has not prevented a decrease in their wages, and at the present time comparatively few of the women are members. The men do not help the women's union as much as they might, and the result of this short sighted policy is that the women tend to displace the men by taking the heavier chains to do, and thus at the same time tend to lower the men's wages . . ." George Shann (in 1906 *Sweated Industries Exhibition Catalogue*—an attempt to publicise the need for legislation on home-working).



Mrs Brewster carding buttons for Samuel Johnson & Sons Ltd of Brixton
Mrs Brewster used to have between 4,000 to 6,000 buttons per week to sew on to cards. The rates vary from 73 pence to £1.30 pence per 1,000. She usually worked over 36 hours a week and her earnings were between £4.00 and £6.00. She often had to sit up sewing until midnight in order to finish in time. The job involved sorting buttons, getting cards into sets of 10, and carding. Mrs Brewster took on the work after she gave up a full time job to look after her son and his little boy. The buttons go to a variety of outlets including Woolworths and to Holland and Germany. □

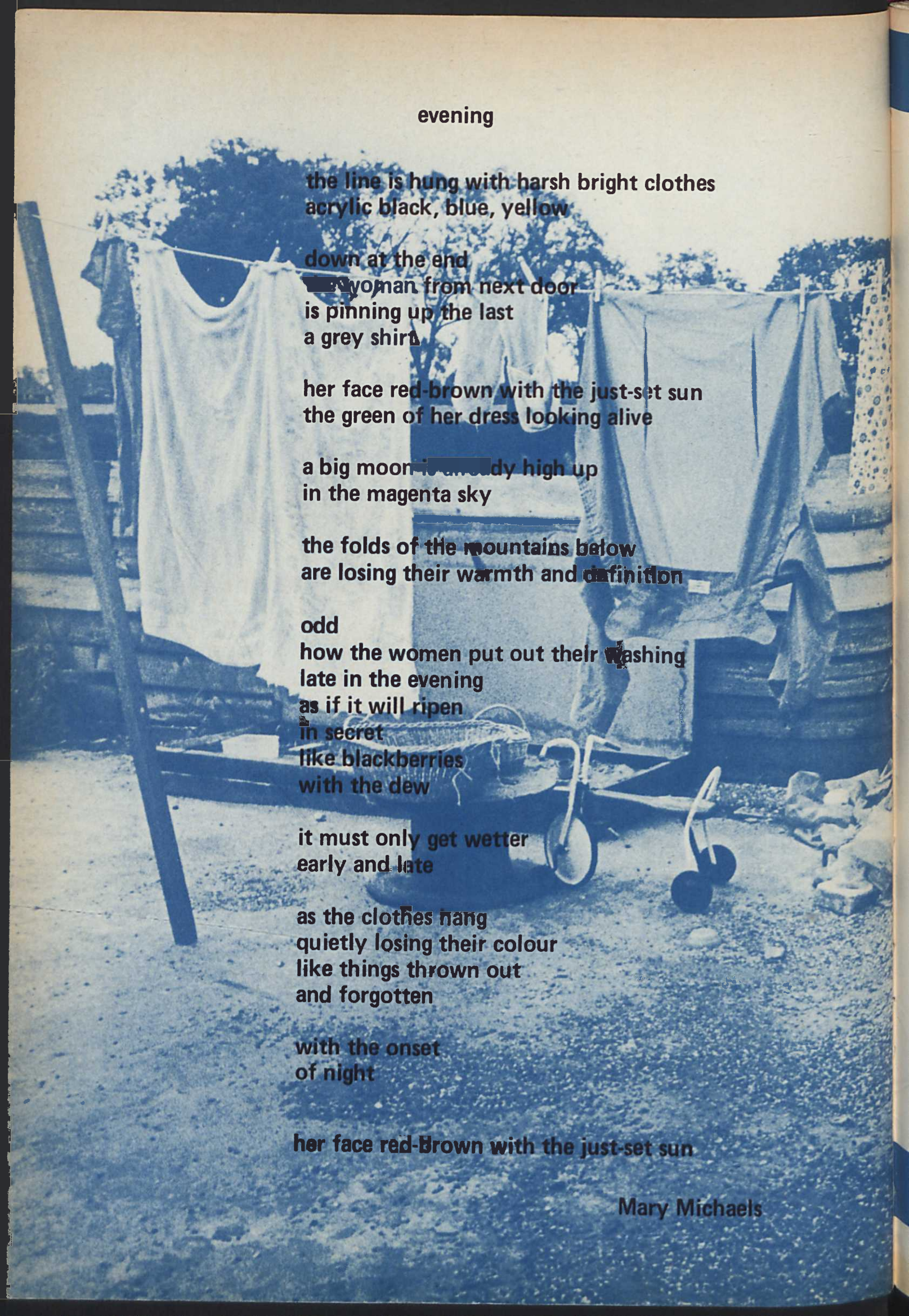
WOMEN'S WORK

March 1–March 24.

Battersea Arts Centre, London.

"During the past several years my professional art practice has been affected by two major factors; one by my own (and my generation's) growing consciousness of our feminism and secondly by a need to both reflect and extend the subject matter of my work into a more realistic relationship with the problems of working people." Accordingly Margaret Harrison collaborated with Helen Eadie, organisational officer for the General and Municipal Workers Union Southern Region, and the London Homeworkers Campaign to assemble a documentary exhibition on the conditions of homeworkers since the nineteenth century. Media cuttings, parliamentary Bills, homeworked objects, photographs and letters provide evidence of the exploitation of homeworkers, for example of the development of international homeworking networks seeking out low wage areas in the EEC, and of local authority day centres undercutting women at home and taking work away from them. The documentation is accompanied by a collage/painting illustrating the complete schism between representations of women in the media and their lives as homeworkers, and summing up the situation of homeworkers, the law and society.

The exhibition will be at the GMW Conference in July and will be available for hire afterwards.

A photograph of laundry hanging on a line in front of a wooden fence. A child's tricycle is in the foreground. The image is in black and white.

evening

the line is hung with harsh bright clothes
acrylic black, blue, yellow

down at the end
the woman from next door
is pinning up the last
a grey shirt

her face red-brown with the just-set sun
the green of her dress looking alive

a big moon is already high up
in the magenta sky

the folds of the mountains below
are losing their warmth and definition

odd
how the women put out their washing
late in the evening
as if it will ripen
in secret
like blackberries
with the dew

it must only get wetter
early and late

as the clothes hang
quietly losing their colour
like things thrown out
and forgotten

with the onset
of night

her face red-brown with the just-set sun

Mary Michaels

Rereading Freud

THE MAKING OF THE FEMININE

How can we account for the persistent notions of masculinity and femininity which have oppressed us for so long?

Ros Coward argues that new developments in psychoanalysis will help us to explore the relationship between sexual and social forms of oppression.

For several years now psychoanalysis has been one of the issues debated within the Women's Movement—in books such as Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* and in study groups. Although interest and discussion have been growing, many women are unhappy about this development. Not only this, but the ways in which this area has been interpreted have been and are very different and quite often imply different political perspectives. Some groups tend to emphasise the apparent 'personal solution' of psychoanalysis—its access to the structures of individual minds and therefore what it might be able to tell us about the experience of being a woman under capitalism. This is largely the emphasis which underlies the development of feminist therapy. At the other extreme, there are some groups which evacuate all reference to the individual, and see psychoanalysis as the crucial theoretical area which will show us how ideology works.

The kind of developments of psychoanalysis which interest me are neither con-

cerned with a subjective 'cure' or help, nor with simply providing the missing link in an already preconstituted field, that is the marxist analysis of society under a capitalist economy.

What is important about psychoanalysis is its potential together with a development of marxist theory for providing an account of how the categories of masculine and feminine are constructed in a particular society. It is this which will make it possible for us to examine the relation between forms of sexual behaviour and forms of social organisation.

The possibility for these kinds of developments has resulted from the work of the French analyst, Jacques Lacan. He is a Freudian psychoanalyst who has offered a 'rereading' of Freud—a reading which stresses certain implicit and till now unexplored aspects of Freud's work—that is, the place of language and its effect on the development of the child growing into a sexed subject.

There are two important implications: first, it becomes impossible to see women

as having some essential 'nature' which is somehow distorted by society. Secondly, the centrality of consciousness is displaced as the object of investigation, since consciousness, like the unconscious, becomes simply an effect of the structure of language.

But even from within such a perspective, a controversy still exists. It is not just that psychoanalysis has traditionally served a reactionary role in relation to women. This criticism is undoubtedly true, particularly in America where it was closely allied to medicine, as it gave women the chance to describe the family structures which oppressed them—and then made them return to those families. There is also a more serious criticism, that Freudian theory is itself irretrievably patriarchal and fails to understand the specific nature of female sexuality. Do we, for example, accept the Freudian account of the Oedipus complex? Or indeed, his account of the feminine process through this complex even though Freud himself admitted his lack of knowledge of female sexuality?

PSYCHOANALYSIS & Marxist Theory in Britain

My interest in psychoanalysis is probably typical of many women's. I had been involved in socialist politics and interested in marxist theory at university. The women's group that I was involved in was questioning the relation between our own attitudes and the actual structural conditions—legal,

political and economic—of our oppression. Were our own attitudes oppressing us as much as these structural conditions? Or was it that these conditions simply imposed attitudes on women—attitudes that lead us into (and into defence of) monogamous, heterosexual family units, into wanting

children and childrearing, into seeing ourselves mainly in roles which serviced and nurtured men? And if this was so, could these attitudes be transformed given a different history? Or was the whole issue more complex? Did it also relate to our sexual identity, did our own sexual desires

(taken usually to be the most 'natural' component in human behaviour) themselves implicate us in oppressive relations and lead us to tolerate unequal economic, legal and sexual treatment?

What this questioning was producing was an awareness of the problem of ideology—not ideology as a cloud of ideas hanging over us, and which we inhabit according to a particular historical moment. Rather it was an awareness that identity was constructed within particular social formations, but which also had a relation to others, and that neither a change in the social structure, nor an altering of attitudes was going to bring about any instant and far-reaching changes.

But the analyses of left groups at that time dismissed these questions as either irrelevant or at least as less important than the objective processes of the economy. Also, and perhaps most importantly, these groups offered an analysis of ideology which was patently unacceptable: their basic theory seemed to be that conservative and reactionary ideas in women and the working class could always be explained as the result of living under capitalist social relations—ideas that would melt away with a change in economic relations. This assertion that these attitudes were simply 'false consciousness' was obviously wrong and crass. As socialist feminists it would be impossible to accept an idea of a pre-given anatomical identity which was alienated now, but would find its true self as soon as capitalism was overthrown, for such an idea denies all possibility of change.



Women's position could not be reduced in any simple way to being an effect of capitalist social relations. It is also crucially to do with a construction of identity and power relations, as well as varying within different social practices.

What we had been forced to confront was the fact that forms of organisation of sexuality did not correspond in any direct way with an economic form of society, and that changes in the economy did not have any direct effect on these forms. It was this discrepancy which led first perhaps

to the assertion that you could talk about 'patriarchy' as the 'cause' of oppressive familial relations—patriarchy understood as the dominance of the father in the family and organiser of the distribution and inheritance of goods in a particular society. Now this concept too seems problematic because it is too monolithic and fails to deal with instances of discrimination clearly produced within a particular social formation.

PSYCHOANALYSIS & Marxism in France

Reading about these problems in the works of the French communist philosopher, Louis Althusser, and the semiologists Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, led me to Lacan. The former writers were responding to a crisis produced partly by the inability of the French left to account for what had happened in the past, for example Stalinism in Russia, or the present—the revolt in France in May, 1968, and the growth of the women's movement. It was in this context that many socialists included psychoanalysis as offering some illumination of the material effects of ideology as opposed to the crude economism with which marxism had come to view all social phenomena. In France anyway there was less hostility to psychoanalysis than in England, and the form of psychoanalysis taken up was very different from the reactionary practice of bourgeois psychoanalysis.

What Lacan put forward was something radically opposed to the idea of a 'cure' that would return 'disturbed' people to oppressive social structures, and to the iden-

tities approved by bourgeois society. Instead he criticised the whole notion of a fixed identity itself. Consciousness, he claimed, is the result of a process of construction. It is not an immanent force, which is natural and god-given, and expresses itself within society. It is produced—at a cost: the small human animal is forced into society by the fact that culture and language pre-exist the individual, and if the child is to put forward any demands, it must acquire language and therefore the positions of sexed identity—masculine and feminine—necessitated by that culture. This is achieved through a process of splitting—first of the infant from its sense of continuum with the mother's body—to form not only the conscious but the unconscious, too, from that which is refused access to conscious representation. It is the acquisition of language and these necessary positions for using that language which produce the conscious and the unconscious processes. These are not two separate and distinct domains, but qualitatively different processes of language. The strangeness and

illogicality of dreams typifies the mode of signification of the unconscious, and these processes constantly displace conscious discourse in the form of jokes, slips of the tongue, and dreams themselves.

These implications which Lacan drew out of Freud's thought had not been clear until the development of modern linguistics under Ferdinand de Saussure elaborated similar discoveries. This emphasis on language was significant for socialist analysis since it provided an account of the individual within society, but without suggesting that the individual was simply determined by the economic forms of society.

For feminism the account was equally momentous. Allied with the assertion of an initial bisexuality, this provided for the first time an account of how the sexed human subject is produced in society. In this context the theory appears revolutionary not only in demonstrating the construction of the subject within society but also in indicating the precariousness of those identifications—male and female—made in this process.



Mirror Phase by CAROLA KLEIN

FREUD

These radical implications of Freud's work make the accusations about his own chauvinism—undoubtedly justified—irrelevant. His ideas were formulated at a particular historical moment when female sexuality was, as Freud said, a 'dark continent'. It was the structures of reproduction, for so long one of the foundations for the unequal position of women, which Freud described.

What then is it in Freud's account that has so much to offer feminism? Freud posited an initial bisexuality of the drives which are only later organised into male/female according to the constraints of social, reproductive relations. At first the small child is sexually indistinguishable. Both the male and female start the activities which Freud characterised as drives, organised into dominant phases of oral, anal, phallic. Freud himself struggled with contemporary ideology which insisted on the association masculine/active, feminine/passive. It was this problem of definition which led to his assertion that in infancy the drives were 'masculine' in character. This was no more than an assertion that infantile sexuality is predominantly active. Consistent with this, Freud attributed to the girl a 'phallic phase', the stage of active, clitoral masturbation which was given up when genital sexuality is enforced through the Oedipus and castration complexes.

For Freud, the organisation of sexuality into the reproductive function, that is, into its final socially sanctioned division male/female results not from biological maturing, but from the castration complex. This division occurred as a result of cultural constraints and not because of any natural process. While Freud drew attention to the relation to cultural forms, it still remains for historical analysis to understand the conditions of existence of these constraints.

Castration in the boy

Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex—earlier incestuous desires on the parent of the opposite sex and jealous hatred of the parent of the same sex—was based on his discovery of its traces in the unconscious expressions of his patients. The castration complex in the boy breaks up the Oedipus complex—the child's desire for his mother—because of the father's threat of castration. Only at this stage does the boy interpret the previous sight of female genitals which he had not allowed himself to register as a lack of the penis, and therefore sexual difference. Freud locates this complex in his idea of human culture, claiming that it is contingent on the taboo against incest, the taboo which the anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss describes as the founding moment of culture, that point at which the social unit ceases to be dominated by blood families, and becomes organised according to social considerations.

Castration in the girl

The problem with Freud's account is his explanation of the girl's development: how and why she should abandon her 'active' sexuality for 'passive' vaginal sexuality. Unlike the boy, for the girl it is the castration complex which brings about the Oedipus complex, which is often never fully resolved. The girl's castration com-

plex occurs at the sight of the different male genitals. Her earlier love for the mother is turned to disappointment with her own damaged narcissism and also with her mother for not having given her a penis. By narcissism, Freud refers to that initial self-love, bound up with the child's sexuality, which is found principally in its own body, and which produces an initial image of itself as a perfect and entire unity.

The girl's disappointment leads to her turning away from her mother and towards her father and to a desire to have his baby. This desire is produced because the baby comes to stand in for the penis as a symbolic representation: the woman doesn't directly have the penis but she has it through the man, and therefore the baby. Whilst this account describes for the first time the way in which cultural constraints place and construct social subjects, there are two major problems with it.

Firstly, the implication that it is through the attribution of inferiority to her organ that the girl abandons active, clitoral sexuality. Although it was meant to describe the organisation of the male/female positions according to social constraints and didn't attribute any natural inferiority, the theory is nevertheless open to the criticism that there is a sort of biologism whereby femininity is established through acceptance of an inferior position in relation to the penis.

Secondly, there is the problem of the account of femininity which is defined exclusively in relation to the male organ. This was the basis of the attack on Freud by Melanie Klein and others who accused him of 'phallocentrism' in attempting to impose a male definition on female development. Klein instead gives an account of a distinct and original female sexuality which develops from an original vaginal organisation. This debate within psychoanalysis, arguing

for an account of the female which isn't phallogocentric, is more reactionary than Freud since it always has to rely on an idea of innate female sexuality. Freud's

theory has the virtue of talking about a process of construction, admittedly not attributed to a specific social formation, but which doesn't suggest any essential form of

femininity. This anti-essentialism had not been stressed in any systematic way until Lacan's work.

LACAN

Lacan writes in language which is often, and wilfully difficult. This has led women to object to the use of obscure male academic work in feminist analysis. The objection, although perfectly understandable, is ironic. Lacan's defence of his writing is precisely its difficulty for academic discourse since it constantly reminds the reader of the presence of the unconscious in language with its use of multiple meanings, puns, and so on. It constantly brings in across language the modes of signification which the language of male-dominated rationalist discourse refuses.

The importance of Lacan's rereading of Freud is that it makes a biologicistic interpretation impossible. It emphasises instead the role that the phallus, as the symbolic representative of the penis, plays in the acquisition of language. Instead of suggesting any biological superiority or inferiority, he stresses the fact that the phallus marks difference as it functions within a particular culture, and is therefore central in the acquisition of language since language is made up of difference. The letter 'c' and 'e' exist only as a result of their being different from each other: it is their combinations in different ways which create words—words do not have any natural relation with things. Lacan's account of the process of construction is based on the linguistic theory of the establishment of differences, drawn from the work of Saussure.

According to Lacan, the small human animal starts life with a total involvement with its mother's body. In this involvement, even the child's own difference from its mother's body is unclear. Differences between sounds and arrangements of sounds into distinct words do not yet exist for the child. Its universe is initially undifferentiated, nor can it differentiate itself from that universe. That the child should be forced to do so is the exigency of culture. The child must be produced as a differentiating and differentiated subject. Unless it does, it will never use language or take up a place as a sexed reproductive subject.

Lacan claims that the existence of language and culture necessitates that the individual finds a place there—either that or falls ill. It is not any process of maturation by which the child slowly unfolds its pre-given characteristics. The child is forced in a process of splitting to become a language-using subject: it must acquire language, and position by which to use language in order to make demands. This process of construction produces both consciousness and the unconscious, and is dominated by two phases—the mirror phase and the castration complex.

The mirror phase

The mirror phase corresponds to the phase of the child's fascination with its own image as its own image, in the mirror. According to Lacan, this stage marks a separation by which the world of subjects and objects can be instituted. It involves the child grasping its identity in separation—in another—either in the mirror or in the mother's view of the child. This identification is the necessary 'spatialisation' for a position in language by which the subject is able to communicate. The identification in the mirror is the first moment in which the infant comes to form an image of itself, separate from its dependency on the mother.

The castration complex in Lacanian theory

The mirror phase shows the production of the possibility of a social subject which is necessary for communication; there must be a subject in order for there to be a subject of a sentence. But at this phase the subject's identifications are dominated by what Lacan calls the *imaginary*. In other words, the identifications are based on a narcissistic image of unity. This unity has to be broken by the fact of difference before the child can take up its position in culture as a sexed subject. Thus all reference to the anatomical superiority of the penis is removed. The phallus is the symbolic representative of the penis, not the actual organ. This is because of its role in the symbolic, the pre-existent linguistic and cultural order. For Lacan, the phallus is the absolute signifier of difference. The boy child, confronted with anatomical difference—the possibility that some creatures exist without a penis—is able to represent what is in fact present—his penis—and this representation is the phallus, the mark of difference.

Not only does Lacan's account do away with the problem of any inherent inferiority, it could also provide a way of understanding how these identifications, organ-

ised specifically for the production of sexed 'reproductive' subjects, come to be placed in social practices which impose inequalities. For if all identifications are produced only within the symbolic structures of the pre-existing culture, the sight of the genitals of the opposite sex would never be an 'original' view. The fact of difference would already be invested with the meaning of the culture in which the child was born. The child could only represent difference according to those representations already available. This may appear deterministic, that we can never escape from the structures which oppress us. But this is not the case since society is never static: there is always struggle to transform relations—economic and political, and increasingly, sexual relations. These are transformations which will obviously affect the way that difference is represented.

These ideas are radical for feminists attempting to understand the construction of the 'feminine' in opposition to any ideas of essential natural femininity. Even then, they are not without their problems: there is no way in which psychoanalysis and marxism could be just put together. But these ideas have made important advances because they provide a way of thinking about the construction of the human subject in society and they also provide a critique of those simplistic notions of identity and ideology which have for so long been stumbling blocks to the development of understanding the specific nature of women's oppression. □

If you want to explore this area further, these books are worth looking at:

Psychoanalysis and Feminism

Juliet Mitchell, Penguin

The Child, His Illness and the Other

M. Mannoni, Penguin

Ecrits Jacques Lacan, Tavistock

About Chinese Women

Julia Kristeva, Marion Boyars

Language and Materialism

Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, RKP

Penguin Freud Library: No 7 *On Sexuality Inquiry in Femininity*

Michele Montrelay M/F, February 1978

Patriarchy Conference Papers, 1976

Mirror Phase, a film by Carola Klein, produced by the British Film Institute Production Dept. will be available from mid-June from the BFI Distribution Library.



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